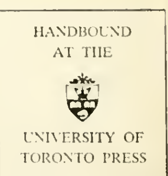

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D. Murray Smith

H. DE BALZAC

THE ATHEIST'S MASS

AND OTHER STORIES

(*La Messe de l'Athée*)

Translated by

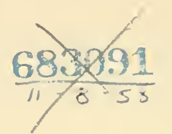
CLARA BELL

with a Preface by

GEORGE SAINTSBURY



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Drawn and Etched by D. Murray-Smith.

PREFACE

The volume which has its chief constituent in *Honorine* contains some of the author's very best work; indeed, it contains very little that is much below his best. The opening story—with its bold statement that 'On trouve partout quelque chose de meilleur que l'Angleterre [which, be it remembered, M. Honoré de Balzac had never seen] tandis qu'il est excessivement difficile de retrouver loin de la France les charmes de la France'—may draw a smile from Englishmen. But just as it is only a very foolish lover who finds fault with any one else for preferring the charms of his own love, so it is only a very weak-minded and weak-kneed patriot who questions the idolatry of a patriotism that is not his own. For the rest, *Honorine* contains some of Balzac's profoundest observations, better stated than is usual, or at least invariable, with him. The best of all are certain axioms, disputed rather than disputable, as to the difference of men's and women's love. The book suffers to some extent from that artistic fault of the recitation, rather than the story proper, to which he was so prone, and perhaps a little from the other proneness—so constantly to be noted in any complete critique of him—to exaggerate and idealise good as well as ill. But it is, as his abomination Sainte-Beuve said of another matter, an *essai noble*; and it is not, as Sainte-Beuve also said of that

matter which had nothing to do with Balzac, an *essai pâle.*

Le Colonel Chabert, which would well have deserved a place in those *Scènes de la Vie Militaire*, so scantily represented in the *Comédie*, has other attractions. It reminds us of Balzac's sojourn in the tents of Themis, and of the knowledge that he brought therefrom; it gives an example of his affection for the *idée fixe*, for the man with a mania; and it is also no inconsiderable example of his pathos.

But it, in like wise with *Honorine*, must give way to the two tales which follow, and which, by the common consent of competent judges, practically take rank, though in very different ways, with the novelist's very best work. Of the two, *La Messe de l'Athée* is the greatest. Its extreme brevity makes it almost impossible for the author to indulge in those digressions from which he never could entirely free himself when he allowed himself much room. We do not hear more of the inward character of Desplein than is necessary to make us appreciate the touching history which is the centre of the anecdote; the thing in general could not be presented at greater advantage than it is. Nor in itself could it be much, if at all, better. As usual, it is more or less of a personal confession. Balzac, it must always be remembered, was himself pretty definitely 'on the side of the angels.' As a Frenchman, as a man with a strong eighteenth-century tincture in him, as a student of Rabelais, as one not too much given to regard nature and fate through rose-coloured spectacles, as a product of more or less godless education (for his school-days came before the neo-catholic revival), and in many other ways, he was not

exactly an orthodox person. But he had no ideas foreign to orthodoxy; and neither in his novels, nor in his letters, nor elsewhere, would it be possible to find a private expression of unbelief. And such a story as this is worth a bookseller's warehouse full of tracts, coming as it does from Honoré de Balzac.

L'Interdiction is sufficiently different, but it is almost equally good in its own way. It is indeed impossible to say that there is not in the manner, though perhaps there may be none in the fact, of the Marquis d'Espard's restitution and the rest of it a little touch of the madder side of Quixotism; and one sees all the speculative and planning Balzac in that notable scheme of the great work on China, which brought in far, far more, I fear, than any work on China ever has or is likely to bring in to its devisers. But the conduct of Popinot, in his interview with the Marquise, is really admirable. The great scenes of fictitious *finesse* do not always 'come off'; we do not invariably find ourselves experiencing that sense of the ability of his characters which the novelist appears to entertain, and expects us to entertain likewise. But this is admirable; it is, with Charles de Bernard's *Le Gendre*, perhaps the very best thing of the kind to be found anywhere. And it is thoroughly well framed in what comes before and after; nor is it, as is too common in Balzac, spoilt by intrusion or accumulation of things irrelevant. These two stories, *L'Interdiction* and *La Messe de l'Athée*, would, if they existed entirely by themselves, and if we knew nothing else of their author's, and nothing else about him, suffice to show any intelligent critic that genius of no ordinary kind had passed by there.

Pierre Grassou is much slighter and smaller; it is not even on a level with *Honorine* or *Le Colonel Chabert*. But it is good in itself; it is very characteristic of its time, and it is specially happy as giving the volume a touch of comedy, which is grateful, and which makes it as a whole rather superior to most of Balzac's volumes,—volumes apt to be 'fagoted' rather than composed. The figure of the artist-*bourgeois*, neither Bohemian nor *buveur d'eau*, is excellently hit off, and the thing leaves us with all the sense of a pleasant afterpiece.

Honorine was rather a late book. It appeared in *La Presse* in the spring of 1843 with a motto from *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, and in six headless chapters; a year later it was published in two volumes by Potter, with forty headed chapters or sections; and in 1845 it took rank in the *Scènes de la Vie Privée* and the *Comédie*. It was then, as it is now, accompanied by the three tales which follow it here, though they do not in the *Édition Définitive*. *Le Colonel Chabert* is a capital example of Balzac's mania for 'pulling about' his stories. It is as old as the spring of 1832, when it appeared in the *Artiste* with the title of *La Transaction*, and in *four* parts. Before the year was out it formed part of a collection of tales called *Le Salmigondis*, but was now called *Le Comte Chabert*. In 1835 it became a *Scène de la Vie Parisienne* (the *Comédie* was not yet) as *La Comtesse à deux Maris*, and in *three* parts. It was shifted to the *Vie Privée* afterwards, with its present title and no divisions; and Balzac, for some reason, altered the date from 1832 to 1840 in the text. *La Messe de l'Athée* appeared first in the *Chronique de Paris* for January 4, 1836; next year joined the other *Études Philosophiques*; and in 1844

the *Vie Privée* and the *Comédie*. *L'Interdiction*, making its bow in the same year and the same paper, was earlier separated from the *Études Philosophiques* to be a *Scène de la Vie Parisienne*. *Pierre Grassou* was first printed in a miscellany named *Babel* in the year 1840, was republished with *Pierrette* in the same year, and joined the 'Maison de Balzac' in 1844.

G. S.

THE ATHEIST'S MASS

This is dedicated to Auguste Borget by his friend
De Balzac

BIANCHON, a physician to whom science owes a fine system of theoretical physiology, and who, while still young, made himself a celebrity in the medical school of Paris, that central luminary to which European doctors do homage, practised surgery for a long time before he took up medicine. His earliest studies were guided by one of the greatest of French surgeons, the illustrious Desplein, who flashed across science like a meteor. By the consensus even of his enemies, he took with him to the tomb an incommunicable method. Like all men of genius, he had no heirs; he carried everything in him, and carried it away with him. The glory of a surgeon is like that of an actor: they live only so long as they are alive, and their talent leaves no trace when they are gone. Actors and surgeons, like great singers too, like the executants who by their performance increase the power of music tenfold, are all the heroes of a moment.

Desplein is a case in proof of this resemblance in the destinies of such transient genius. His name, yesterday so famous, to-day almost forgotten, will survive in his special department without crossing its limits. For must there not be some extraordinary circumstances to exalt the name of a professor from the history of Science to the general history of the human race? Had Desplein that universal command of knowledge which makes a

man the living word, the great figure of his age? Desplein had a godlike eye; he saw into the sufferer and his malady by an intuition, natural or acquired, which enabled him to grasp the diagnostics peculiar to the individual, to determine the very time, the hour, the minute when an operation should be performed, making due allowance for atmospheric conditions and peculiarities of individual temperament. To proceed thus, hand in hand with nature, had he then studied the constant assimilation by living beings, of the elements contained in the atmosphere, or yielded by the earth to man who absorbs them, deriving from them a particular expression of life? Did he work it all out by the power of deduction and analogy, to which we owe the genius of Cuvier? Be this as it may, this man was in all the secrets of the human frame; he knew it in the past and in the future, emphasising the present.

But did he epitomise all science in his own person as Hippocrates did and Galen and Aristotle? Did he guide a whole school towards new worlds? No. Though it is impossible to deny that this peristent observer of human chemistry possessed the antique science of the Mages, that is to say, knowledge of the elements in fusion, the causes of life, life antecedent to life, and what it must be in its incubation or ever it *is*, it must be confessed that, unfortunately, everything in him was purely personal. Isolated during his life by his egoism, that egoism is now suicidal of his glory. On his tomb there is no proclaiming statue to repeat to posterity the mysteries which genius seeks out at its own cost.

But perhaps Desplein's genius was answerable for his beliefs, and for that reason mortal. To him the terrestrial atmosphere was a generative envelope; he saw the earth as an egg within its shell; and not being able to determine whether the egg or the hen first was, he would not recognise either the cock or the egg. He believed neither in the antecedent animal nor the surviv-

ing spirit of man. Desplein had no doubts; he was positive. His bold and unqualified atheism was like that of many scientific men, the best men in the world, but invincible atheists—atheists such as religious people declare to be impossible. This opinion could scarcely exist otherwise in a man who was accustomed from his youth to dissect the creature above all others—before, during, and after life; to hunt through all his organs without ever finding the individual soul, which is indispensable to religious theory. When he detected a cerebral centre, a nervous centre, and a centre for aerating the blood—the two first so perfectly complementary that in the latter years of his life he came to a conviction that the sense of hearing is not absolutely necessary for hearing, nor the sense of sight for seeing, and that the solar plexus could supply their place without any possibility of doubt—Desplein, thus finding two souls in man, confirmed his atheism by this fact, though it is no evidence against God. This man died, it is said, in final impenitence, as do, unfortunately, many noble geniuses, whom God may forgive.

The life of this man, great as he was, was marred by many meannesses, to use the expression employed by his enemies, who were anxious to diminish his glory, but which it would be more proper to call apparent contradictions. Envious people and fools, having no knowledge of the determinations by which superior spirits are moved, seize at once on superficial inconsistencies, to formulate an accusation and so to pass sentence on them. If, subsequently, the proceedings thus attacked are crowned with success, showing the correlation of the preliminaries and the results, a few of the vanguard of calumnies always survive. In our own day, for instance, Napoleon was condemned by our contemporaries when he spread his eagle's wings to alight in England: only 1822 could explain 1804 and the flat boats at Boulogne.

As, in Desplein, his glory and science were invulner-

able, his enemies attacked his odd moods and his temper, whereas, in fact, he was simply characterised by what the English call eccentricity. Sometimes very handsomely dressed, like Crébillon the tragical, he would suddenly affect extreme indifference as to what he wore ; he was sometimes seen in a carriage, and sometimes on foot. By turns rough and kind, harsh and covetous on the surface, but capable of offering his whole fortune to his exiled masters—who did him the honour of accepting it for a few days—no man ever gave rise to such contradictory judgments. Although to obtain a black ribbon, which physicians ought not to intrigue for, he was capable of dropping a prayer-book out of his pocket at Court, in his heart he mocked at everything ; he had a deep contempt for men, after studying them from above and below, after detecting their genuine expression when performing the most solemn and the meanest acts of their lives.

The qualities of a great man are often federative. If among these colossal spirits one has more talent than wit, his wit is still superior to that of a man of whom it is simply stated that 'he is witty.' Genius always presupposes moral insight. This insight may be applied to a special subject ; but he who can see a flower must be able to see the sun. The man who on hearing a diplomate he had saved ask, 'How is the Emperor ?' could say, 'The courtier is alive ; the man will follow !' —that man is not merely a surgeon or a physician, he is prodigiously witty also. Hence a patient and diligent student of human nature will admit Desplein's exorbitant pretensions, and believe—as he himself believed—that he might have been no less great as a minister than he was as a surgeon.

Among the riddles which Desplein's life presents to many of his contemporaries, we have chosen one of the most interesting, because the answer is to be found at the end of the narrative, and will avenge him for some foolish charges.

Of all the students in Desplein's hospital, Horace Bianchon was one of those to whom he most warmly attached himself. Before being a house surgeon at the Hôtel-Dieu, Horace Bianchon had been a medical student lodging in a squalid boarding-house in the *Quartier Latin*, known as the Maison Vauquer. This poor young man had felt there the gnawing of that burning poverty which is a sort of crucible from which great talents are to emerge as pure and incorruptible as diamonds, which may be subjected to any shock without being crushed. In the fierce fire of their unbridled passions they acquire the most impeccable honesty, and get into the habit of fighting the battles which await genius with the constant work by which they coerce their cheated appetites.

Horace was an upright young fellow, incapable of tergiversation on a matter of honour, going to the point without waste of words, and as ready to pledge his cloak for a friend as to give him his time and his night hours. Horace, in short, was one of those friends who are never anxious as to what they may get in return for what they give, feeling sure that they will in their turn get more than they give. Most of his friends felt for him that deeply-seated respect which is inspired by unostentatious virtue, and many of them dreaded his censure. But Horace made no pedantic display of his qualities. He was neither a puritan nor a preacher; he could swear with a grace as he gave his advice, and was always ready for a jollification when occasion offered. A jolly companion, not more prudish than a trooper, as frank and outspoken—not as a sailor, for nowadays sailors are wily diplomates—but as an honest man who has nothing in his life to hide, he walked with his head erect, and a mind content. In short, to put the facts into a word, Horace was the Pylades of more than one Orestes—creditors being regarded as the nearest modern equivalent to the Furies of the ancients.

He carried his poverty with the cheerfulness which is

perhaps one of the chief elements of courage, and, like all people who have nothing, he made very few debts. As sober as a camel and active as a stag, he was steadfast in his ideas and his conduct.

The happy phase of Bianchon's life began on the day when the famous surgeon had proof of the qualities and the defects which, these no less than those, make Doctor Horace Bianchon doubly dear to his friends. When a leading clinical practitioner takes a young man to his bosom, that young man has, as they say, his foot in the stirrup. Desplein did not fail to take Bianchon as his assistant to wealthy houses, where some complimentary fee almost always found its way into the student's pocket, and where the mysteries of Paris life were insensibly revealed to the young provincial; he kept him at his side when a consultation was to be held, and gave him occupation; sometimes he would send him to a watering-place with a rich patient; in fact, he was making a practice for him. The consequence was that in the course of time the Tyrant of surgery had a devoted ally. These two men—one at the summit of honour and of his science, enjoying an immense fortune and an immense reputation; the other a humble Omega, having neither fortune nor fame—became intimate friends.

The great Desplein told his house surgeon everything; the disciple knew whether such or such a woman had sat on a chair near the master, or on the famous couch in Desplein's surgery, on which he slept; Bianchon knew the mysteries of that temperament, a compound of the lion and the bull, which at last expanded and enlarged beyond measure the great man's torso, and caused his death by degeneration of the heart. He studied the eccentricities of that busy life, the schemes of that sordid avarice, the hopes of the politician who lurked behind the man of science; he was able to foresee the mortifications that awaited the only sentiment that lay hid in a heart that was steeled, but not of steel.

One day Bianchon spoke to Desplein of a poor water-carrier of the Saint-Jacques district, who had a horrible disease caused by fatigue and want; this wretched Auvergnat had had nothing but potatoes to eat during the dreadful winter of 1821. Desplein left all his visits, and at the risk of killing his horse, he rushed off, followed by Bianchon, to the poor man's dwelling, and saw, himself, to his being removed to a sick house, founded by the famous Dubois in the Faubourg Saint-Denis. Then he went to attend the man, and when he had cured him he gave him the necessary sum to buy a horse and a water-barrel. This Auvergnat distinguished himself by an amusing action. One of his friends fell ill, and he took him at once to Desplein, saying to his benefactor, 'I could not have borne to let him go to any one else!'

Rough customer as he was, Desplein grasped the water-carrier's hand, and said, 'Bring them all to me.'

He got the native of Cantal into the Hôtel-Dieu, where he took the greatest care of him. Bianchon had already observed in his chief a predilection for Auvergnats, and especially for water-carriers; but as Desplein took a sort of pride in his cures at the Hôtel-Dieu, the pupil saw nothing very strange in that.

One day, as he crossed the Place Saint-Sulpice, Bianchon caught sight of his master going into the church at about nine in the morning. Desplein, who at that time never went a step without his cab, was on foot, and slipped in by the door in the Rue du Petit-Lion, as if he were stealing into some house of ill fame. The house surgeon, naturally possessed by curiosity, knowing his master's opinions, and being himself a rabid follower of Cabanis (*Cabaniste en dyable*, with the *y*, which in Rabelais seems to convey an intensity of devilry)—Bianchon stole into the church, and was not a little astonished to see the great Desplein, the atheist, who had no mercy on the angels—who give no work to the lancet, and cannot suffer from fistula or gastritis—in short,

this audacious scoffer kneeling humbly, and where? In the Lady Chapel, where he remained through the mass, giving alms for the expenses of the service, alms for the poor, and looking as serious as though he were superintending an operation.

'He has certainly not come here to clear up the question of the Virgin's delivery,' said Bianchon to himself, astonished beyond measure. 'If I had caught him holding one of the ropes of the canopy on Corpus Christi day, it would be a thing to laugh at; but at this hour, alone, with no one to see—it is surely a thing to marvel at!'

Bianchon did not wish to seem as though he were spying the head surgeon of the Hôtel-Dieu; he went away. As it happened, Desplein asked him to dine with him that day, not at his own house, but at a restaurant. At dessert Bianchon skilfully contrived to talk of the mass, speaking of it as mummery and a farce.

'A farce,' said Desplein, 'which has cost Christendom more blood than all Napoleon's battles and all Broussais' leeches. The mass is a papal invention, not older than the sixth century, and based on the *Hoc est corpus.* What floods of blood were shed to establish the Fête-Dieu, the Festival of Corpus Christi—the institution by which Rome established her triumph in the question of the Real Presence, a schism which rent the Church during three centuries! The wars of the Count of Toulouse against the Albigenses were the tail end of that dispute. The Vaudois and the Albigenses refused to recognise this innovation.'

In short, Desplein was delighted to disport himself in his most atheistical vein; a flow of Voltairian satire, or, to be accurate, a vile imitation of the *Citateur.*

'Hallo! where is my worshipper of this morning?' said Bianchon to himself.

He said nothing; he began to doubt whether he had really seen his chief at Saint-Sulpice. Desplein would

not have troubled himself to tell Bianchon a lie, they knew each other too well; they had already exchanged thoughts on quite equally serious subjects, and discussed systems *de natura rerum*, probing or dissecting them with the knife and scalpel of incredulity.

Three months went by. Bianchon did not attempt to follow the matter up, though it remained stamped on his memory. One day that year, one of the physicians of the Hôtel-Dieu took Desplein by the arm, as if to question him, in Bianchon's presence.

'What were you doing at Saint-Sulpice, my dear master?' said he.

'I went to see a priest who has a diseased knee-bone, and to whom the Duchesse d'Angoulême did me the honour to recommend me,' said Desplein.

The questioner took this defeat for an answer; not so Bianchon.

'Oh, he goes to see damaged knees in church!—He went to mass,' said the young man to himself.

Bianchon resolved to watch Desplein. He remembered the day and hour when he had detected him going into Saint-Sulpice, and resolved to be there again next year on the same day and at the same hour, to see if he should find him there again. In that case the periodicity of his devotions would justify a scientific investigation; for in such a man there ought to be no direct antagonism of thought and action.

Next year, on the said day and hour, Bianchon, who had already ceased to be Desplein's house surgeon, saw the great man's cab standing at the corner of the Rue de Tournon and the Rue du Petit-Lion, whence his friend jesuitically crept along by the wall of Saint-Sulpice, and once more attended mass in front of the Virgin's altar. It was Desplein, sure enough! The master-surgeon, the atheist at heart, the worshipper by chance. The mystery was greater than ever; the regularity of the phenomenon complicated it. When Desplein had

left, Bianchon went to the sacristan, who took charge of the chapel, and asked him whether the gentleman were a constant worshipper.

'For twenty years that I have been here,' replied the man, 'M. Desplein has come four times a year to attend this mass. He founded it.'

'A mass founded by him!' said Bianchon, as he went away. 'This is as great a mystery as the Immaculate Conception—an article which alone is enough to make a physician an unbeliever.'

Some time elapsed before Doctor Bianchon, though so much his friend, found an opportunity of speaking to Desplein of this incident of his life. Though they met in consultation, or in society, it was difficult to find an hour of confidential solitude when, sitting with their feet on the fire-dogs and their head resting on the back of an arm-chair, two men tell each other their secrets. At last, seven years later, after the Revolution of 1830, when the mob invaded the Archbishop's residence, when Republican agitators spurred them on to destroy the gilt crosses which flashed like streaks of lightning in the immensity of the ocean of houses; when Incredulity flaunted itself in the streets, side by side with Rebellion, Bianchon once more detected Desplein going into Saint-Sulpice. The doctor followed him, and knelt down by him without the slightest notice or demonstration of surprise from his friend. They both attended this mass of his founding.

'Will you tell me, my dear fellow,' said Bianchon, as they left the church, 'the reason for your fit of monkishness? I have caught you three times going to mass—— You! You must account to me for this mystery, explain such a flagrant disagreement between your opinions and your conduct. You do not believe in God, and yet you attend mass? My dear master, you are bound to give me an answer.'

'I am like a great many devout people, men who on

the surface are deeply religious, but quite as much atheists as you or I can be.'

And he poured out a torrent of epigrams on certain political personages, of whom the best known gives us, in this century, a new edition of Molière's *Tartufe*.

'All that has nothing to do with my question,' retorted Bianchon. 'I want to know the reason for what you have just been doing, and why you founded this mass.'

'Faith! my dear boy,' said Desplein, 'I am on the verge of the tomb; I may safely tell you about the beginning of my life.'

At this moment Bianchon and the great man were in the Rue des Quatre-Vents, one of the worst streets in Paris. Desplein pointed to the sixth floor of one of the houses looking like obelisks, of which the narrow door opens into a passage with a winding staircase at the end, with windows appropriately termed 'borrowed lights'—or, in French, *jours de souffrance*. It was a greenish structure; the ground floor occupied by a furniture dealer, while each floor seemed to shelter a different and independent form of misery. Throwing up his arm with a vehement gesture, Desplein exclaimed—

'I lived up there for two years.'

'I know; Arthez lived there; I went up there almost every day during my first youth; we used to call it then the pickle-jar of great men! What then?'

'The mass I have just attended is connected with some events which took place at the time when I lived in the garret where you say Arthez lived; the one with the window where the clothes line is hanging with linen over a pot of flowers. My early life was so hard, my dear Bianchon, that I may dispute the palm of Paris suffering with any man living. I have endured everything: hunger and thirst, want of money, want of clothes, of shoes, of linen, every cruelty that penury can inflict. I have blown on my frozen fingers in that *pickle-jar of great men*, which I should like to see again,

now, with you. I worked through a whole winter, seeing my head steam, and perceiving the atmosphere of my own moisture as we see that of horses on a frosty day. I do not know where a man finds the fulcrum that enables him to hold out against such a life.

'I was alone, with no one to help me, no money to buy books or to pay the expenses of my medical training; I had not a friend; my irascible, touchy, restless temper was against me. No one understood that this irritability was the distress and toil of a man who, at the bottom of the social scale, is struggling to reach the surface. Still, I had, as I may say to you, before whom I need wear no draperies, I had that ground-bed of good feeling and keen sensitiveness which must always be the birthright of any man who is strong enough to climb to any height whatever, after having long trampled in the bogs of poverty. I could obtain nothing from my family, nor from my home, beyond my inadequate allowance. In short, at that time, I breakfasted off a roll which the baker in the Rue du Petit-Lion sold me cheap because it was left from yesterday or the day before, and I crumbled it into milk; thus my morning meal cost me but two sous. I dined only every other day in a boarding-house where the meal cost me sixteen sous. You know as well as I what care I must have taken of my clothes and shoes. I hardly know whether in later life we feel grief so deep when a colleague plays us false, as we have known, you and I, on detecting the mocking smile of a gaping seam in a shoe, or hearing the armhole of a coat split. I drank nothing but water; I regarded a café with distant respect. Zoppi's seemed to me a promised land where none but the Lucullus of the *pays Latin* had a right of entry. "Shall I ever take a cup of coffee there with milk in it?" said I to myself, "or play a game of dominoes?"

'I threw into my work the fury I felt at my misery. I tried to master positive knowledge so as to acquire the greatest personal value, and merit the position I should

hold as soon as I could escape from nothingness. I consumed more oil than bread; the light I burned during these endless nights cost me more than food. It was a long duel, obstinate, with no sort of consolation. I found no sympathy anywhere. To have friends, must we not form connections with young men, have a few sous so as to be able to go tippling with them and meet them where students congregate? And I had nothing! And no one in Paris can understand that nothing means *nothing*. When I even thought of revealing my beggary, I had that nervous contraction of the throat which makes a sick man believe that a ball rises up from the œsophagus into the larynx.

'In later life I have met people born to wealth who, never having wanted for anything, had never even heard this problem in the rule of three: A young man is to crime as a five-franc piece is to *x*.—These gilded idiots say to me, "Why did you get into debt? Why did you involve yourself in such onerous obligations?" They remind me of the princess who, on hearing that the people lacked bread, said, "Why do not they buy cakes?" I should like to see one of these rich men, who complain that I charge too much for an operation,—yes, I should like to see him alone in Paris without a sou, without a friend, without credit, and forced to work with his five fingers to live at all! What would he do? Where would he go to satisfy his hunger?

'Bianchon, if you have sometimes seen me hard and bitter, it was because I was adding my early sufferings on to the insensibility, the selfishness of which I have seen thousands of instances in the highest circles; or, perhaps, I was thinking of the obstacles which hatred, envy, jealousy, and calumny raised up between me and success. In Paris, when certain people see you ready to set your foot in the stirrup, some pull your coat-tails, others loosen the buckle of the strap that you may fall and crack your skull; one wrenches off your horse's shoes,

another steals your whip, and the least treacherous of them all is the man whom you see coming to fire his pistol at you point blank.

'You yourself, my dear boy, are clever enough to make acquaintance before long with the odious and incessant warfare waged by mediocrity against the superior man. If you should drop five-and-twenty louis one day, you will be accused of gambling on the next, and your best friends will report that you have lost twenty-five thousand. If you have a headache, you will be considered mad. If you are a little hasty, no one can live with you. If, to make a stand against this armament of pigmies, you collect your best powers, your best friends will cry out that you want to have everything, that you aim at domineering, at tyranny. In short, your good points will become your faults, your faults will be vices, and your virtues crimes.

'If you save a man, you will be said to have killed him ; if he reappears on the scene, it will be positive that you have secured the present at the cost of the future. If he is not dead, he will die. Stumble, and you fall ! Invent anything of any kind and claim your rights, you will be crotchety, cunning, ill-disposed to rising younger men.

'So, you see, my dear fellow, if I do not believe in God, I believe still less in man. But do not you know in me another Desplein, altogether different from the Desplein whom every one abuses ?—However, we will not stir that mud-heap.

'Well, I was living in that house, I was working hard to pass my first examination, and I had no money at all. You know. I had come to one of those moments of extremity when a man says, "I will enlist." I had one hope. I expected from my home a box full of linen, a present from one of those old aunts who, knowing nothing of Paris, think of your shirts, while they imagine that their nephew with thirty francs a month is eating

ortolans. The box arrived while I was at the schools; it had cost forty francs for carriage. The porter, a German shoemaker living in a loft, had paid the money and kept the box. I walked up and down the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-des-Près and the Rue de l'Ecole de Médecine without hitting on any scheme which would release my trunk without the payment of the forty francs, which of course I could pay as soon as I should have sold the linen. My stupidity proved to me that surgery was my only vocation. My good fellow, refined souls, whose powers move in a lofty atmosphere, have none of that spirit of intrigue that is fertile in resource and device; their good genius is chance; they do not invent, things come to them.

'At night I went home, at the very moment when my fellow lodger also came in—a water-carrier named Bourgeat, a native of Saint-Flour. We knew each other as two lodgers do who have rooms off the same landing, and who hear each other sleeping, coughing, dressing, and so at last become used to one another. My neighbour informed me that the landlord, to whom I owed three-quarters' rent, had turned me out; I must clear out next morning. He himself was also turned out on account of his occupation. I spent the most miserable night of my life. Where was I to get a messenger who could carry my few chattels and my books? How could I pay him and the porter? Where was I to go? I repeated these unanswerable questions again and again, in tears, as madmen repeat their tunes. I fell asleep; poverty has for its friend heavenly slumbers full of beautiful dreams.

'Next morning, just as I was swallowing my little bowl of bread soaked in milk, Bourgeat came in and said to me in his vile Auvergne accent—

'"*Mouchieur l'Etudiant*, I am a poor man, a foundling from the hospital at Saint-Flour, without either father or mother, and not rich enough to marry. You are not fertile in relations either, nor well supplied

with the ready? Listen, I have a hand-cart downstairs which I have hired for two sous an hour; it will hold all our goods; if you like, we will try to find lodgings together, since we are both turned out of this. It is not the earthly paradise, when all is said and done."

'"I know that, my good Bourgeat," said I. "But I am in a great fix. I have a trunk downstairs with a hundred francs' worth of linen in it, out of which I could pay the landlord and all I owe to the porter, and I have not a hundred sous."

'"Pooh! I have a few dibs," replied Bourgeat joyfully, and he pulled out a greasy old leather purse. "Keep your linen."

'Bourgeat paid up my arrears and his own, and settled with the porter. Then he put our furniture and my box of linen in his cart, and pulled it along the street, stopping in front of every house where there was a notice board. I went up to see whether the rooms to let would suit us. At midday we were still wandering about the neighbourhood without having found anything. The price was the great difficulty. Bourgeat proposed that we should eat at a wine shop, leaving the cart at the door. Towards evening I discovered, in the Cour de Rohan, Passage du Commerce, at the very top of a house next the roof, two rooms with a staircase between them. Each of us was to pay sixty francs a year. So there we were housed, my humble friend and I. We dined together. Bourgeat, who earned about fifty sous a day, had saved a hundred crowns or so; he would soon be able to gratify his ambition by buying a barrel and a horse. On learning my situation—for he extracted my secrets with a quiet craftiness and good nature, of which the remembrance touches my heart to this day, he gave up for a time the ambition of his whole life; for twenty-two years he had been carrying water in the street, and he now devoted his hundred crowns to my future prospects.'

Desplein at these words clutched Bianchon's arm tightly. 'He gave me the money for my examination fees! That man, my friend, understood that I had a mission, that the needs of my intellect were greater than his. He looked after me, he called me his boy, he lent me money to buy books, he would come in softly sometimes to watch me at work, and took a mother's care in seeing that I had wholesome and abundant food, instead of the bad and insufficient nourishment I had been condemned to. Bourgeat, a man of about forty, had a homely, mediæval type of face, a prominent forehead, a head that a painter might have chosen as a model for that of Lycurgus. The poor man's heart was big with affections seeking an object; he had never been loved but by a poodle that had died some time since, of which he would talk to me, asking whether I thought the Church would allow masses to be said for the repose of its soul. His dog, said he, had been a good Christian, who for twelve years had accompanied him to church, never barking, listening to the organ without opening his mouth, and crouching beside him in a way that made it seem as though he were praying too.

'This man centred all his affections in me; he looked upon me as a forlorn and suffering creature, and he became, to me, the most thoughtful mother, the most considerate benefactor, the ideal of the virtue which rejoices in its own work. When I met him in the street, he would throw me a glance of intelligence full of unutterable dignity; he would affect to walk as though he carried no weight, and seemed happy in seeing me in good health and well dressed. It was, in fact, the devoted affection of the lower classes, the love of a girl of the people transferred to a loftier level. Bourgeat did all my errands, woke me at night at any fixed hour, trimmed my lamp, cleaned our landing; as good as a servant as he was as a father, and as clean as an English girl. He did all the housework. Like

Philopœmen, he sawed our wood, and gave to all he did the grace of simplicity while preserving his dignity, for he seemed to understand that the end ennobles every act.

'When I left this good fellow, to be house surgeon at the Hôtel-Dieu, I felt an indescribable, dull pain, knowing that he could no longer live with me; but he comforted himself with the prospect of saving up money enough for me to take my degree, and he made me promise to go to see him whenever I had a day out: Bourgeat was proud of me. He loved me for my own sake, and for his own. If you look up my thesis, you will see that I dedicated it to him.

'During the last year of my residence as house surgeon I earned enough to repay all I owed to this worthy Auvergnat by buying him a barrel and a horse. He was furious with rage at learning that I had been depriving myself of spending my money, and yet he was delighted to see his wishes fulfilled; he laughed and scolded, he looked at his barrel, at his horse, and wiped away a tear, as he said, "It is too bad. What a splendid barrel! You really ought not. Why, that horse is as strong as an Auvergnat!"

'I never saw a more touching scene. Bourgeat insisted on buying for me the case of instruments mounted in silver which you have seen in my room, and which is to me the most precious thing there. Though enchanted with my first success, never did the least sign, the least word, escape him which might imply, "This man owes all to me!" And yet, but for him, I should have died of want; he had eaten bread rubbed with garlic that I might have coffee to enable me to sit up at night.

'He fell ill. As you may suppose, I passed my nights by his bedside, and the first time I pulled him through; but two years after he had a relapse; in spite of the utmost care, in spite of the greatest exertions of science, he succumbed. No king was ever nursed as he was. Yes, Bianchon, to snatch that man from death I tried

unheard-of things. I wanted him to live long enough to show him his work accomplished, to realise all his hopes, to give expression to the only need for gratitude that ever filled my heart, to quench a fire that burns in me to this day.

'Bourgeat, my second father, died in my arms,' Desplein went on, after a pause, visibly moved. 'He left me everything he possessed by a will he had had made by a public scrivener, dating from the year when we had gone to live in the Cour de Rohan.

'This man's faith was perfect; he loved the Holy Virgin as he might have loved his wife. He was an ardent Catholic, but never said a word to me about my want of religion. When he was dying he entreated me to spare no expense that he might have every possible benefit of clergy. I had a mass said for him every day. Often, in the night, he would tell me of his fears as to his future fate; he feared his life had not been saintly enough. Poor man! he was at work from morning till night. For whom, then, is Paradise—if there be a Paradise? He received the last sacrament like the saint that he was, and his death was worthy of his life.

'I alone followed him to the grave. When I had laid my only benefactor to rest, I looked about to see how I could pay my debt to him; I found he had neither family nor friends, neither wife nor child. But he believed. He had a religious conviction; had I any right to dispute it? He had spoken to me timidly of masses said for the repose of the dead; he would not impress it on me as a duty, thinking that it would be a form of repayment for his services. As soon as I had money enough I paid to Saint-Sulpice the requisite sum for four masses every year. As the only thing I can do for Bourgeat is thus to satisfy his pious wishes, on the days when that mass is said, at the beginning of each season of the year, I go for his sake and say the required prayers; and I say with the good faith of a sceptic—"Great God, if there is a sphere

which Thou hast appointed after death for those who have been perfect, remember good Bourgeat ; and if he should have anything to suffer, let me suffer it for him, that he may enter all the sooner into what is called Paradise."

'That, my dear fellow, is as much as a man who holds my opinions can allow himself. But God must be a good fellow ; He cannot owe me any grudge. I swear to you, I would give my whole fortune if faith such as Bourgeat's could enter my brain.'

Bianchon, who was with Desplein all through his last illness, dares not affirm to this day that the great surgeon died an atheist. Will not those who believe like to fancy that the humble Auvergnat came to open the gate of heaven to his friend, as he did that of the earthly temple on whose pediment we read the words—'A grateful country to its great men.'

PARIS, *January* 1836.

HONORINE

To Monsieur Achille Devéria.

An affectionate remembrance from the Author.

If the French have as great an aversion for travelling as the English have a propensity for it, both English and French have perhaps sufficient reasons. Something better than England is everywhere to be found; whereas it is excessively difficult to find the charms of France outside France. Other countries can show admirable scenery, and they frequently offer greater comfort than that of France, which makes but slow progress in that particular. They sometimes display a bewildering magnificence, grandeur, and luxury; they lack neither grace nor noble manners; but the life of the brain, the talent for conversation, the 'Attic salt' so familiar at Paris, the prompt apprehension of what one is thinking, but does not say, the spirit of the unspoken, which is half the French language, is nowhere else to be met with. Hence a Frenchman, whose raillery, as it is, finds so little comprehension, would wither in a foreign land like an uprooted tree. Emigration is counter to the instincts of the French nation. Many Frenchmen, of the kind here in question, have owned to pleasure at seeing the custom-house officers of their native land, which may seem the most daring hyberbole of patriotism.

This little preamble is intended to recall to such Frenchmen as have travelled the extreme pleasure they have felt on occasionally finding their native land, like

an oasis, in the drawing-room of some diplomate: a pleasure hard to be understood by those who have never left the asphalte of the Boulevard des Italiens, and to whom the Quais of the left bank of the Seine are not really Paris. To find Paris again! Do you know what that means, O Parisians? It is to find—not indeed the cookery of the *Rocher de Cancale* as Borel elaborates it for those who can appreciate it, for that exists only in the Rue Montorgueil—but a meal which reminds you of it! It is to find the wines of France, which out of France are to be regarded as myths, and as rare as the woman of whom I write! It is to find—not the most fashionable pleasantry, for it loses its aroma between Paris and the frontier—but the witty, understanding, the critical atmosphere in which the French live, from the poet down to the artisan, from the duchess to the boy in the street.

In 1836, when the Sardinian Court was residing at Genoa, two Parisians, more or less famous, could fancy themselves still in Paris when they found themselves in a palazzo, taken by the French Consul-General, on the hill forming the last fold of the Apennines between the gate of San Tomaso and the well-known lighthouse, which is to be seen in all the keepsake views of Genoa. This palazzo is one of the magnificent villas on which Genoese nobles were wont to spend millions at the time when the aristocratic republic was a power.

If the early night is beautiful anywhere, it surely is at Genoa, after it has rained as it can rain there, in torrents, all the morning; when the clearness of the sea vies with that of the sky; when silence reigns on the quay and in the groves of the villa, and over the marble heads with yawning jaws, from which water mysteriously flows; when the stars are beaming; when the waves of the Mediterranean lap one after another like the avowal of a woman, from whom you drag it word by word. It must be confessed, that the moment when the perfumed air

brings fragrance to the lungs and to our day-dreams; when voluptuousness, made visible and ambient as the air, holds you in your easy-chair; when, a spoon in your hand, you sip an ice or a sorbet, the town at your feet and fair women opposite—such Boccaccio hours can be known only in Italy and on the shores of the Mediterranean.

Imagine to yourself, round the table, the Marquis di Negro, a knight hospitaller to all men of talent on their travels, and the Marquis Damaso Pareto, two Frenchmen disguised as Genoese, a Consul-General with a wife as beautiful as a Madonna, and two silent children—silent because sleep has fallen on them—the French Ambassador and his wife, a secretary to the Embassy who believes himself to be crushed and mischievous; finally, two Parisians, who have come to take leave of the Consul's wife at a splendid dinner, and you will have the picture presented by the terrace of the villa about the middle of May—a picture in which the predominant figure was that of a celebrated woman, on whom all eyes centred now and again, the heroine of this improvised festival.

One of the two Frenchmen was the famous landscape painter, Léon de Lora; the other a well-known critic, Claude Vignon. They had both come with this lady, one of the glories of the fair sex, Mademoiselle des Touches, known in the literary world by the name of Camille Maupin.

Mademoiselle des Touches had been to Florence on business. With the charming kindness of which she is prodigal, she had brought with her Léon de Lora to show him Italy, and had gone on as far as Rome that he might see the Campagna. She had come by the Simplon, and was returning by the Cornice road to Marseilles. She had stopped at Genoa, again on the landscape painter's account. The Consul-General had, of course, wished to do the honours of Genoa, before the arrival of the Court, to a woman whose wealth, name, and position recommend her no less than her talents. Camille Maupin, who knew

her Genoa down to its smallest chapels, had left her landscape painter to the care of the diplomate and the two Genoese marquises, and was miserly of her minutes. Though the ambassador was a distinguished man of letters, the celebrated lady had refused to yield to his advances, dreading what the English call an exhibition; but she had drawn in the claws of her refusals when it was proposed that they should spend a farewell day at the Consul's villa. Léon de Lora had told Camille that her presence at the villa was the only return he could make to the Ambassador and his wife, the two Genoese noblemen, the Consul and his wife. So Mademoiselle des Touches had sacrificed one of those days of perfect freedom, which are not always to be had in Paris by those on whom the world has its eye.

Now, the meeting being accounted for, it is easy to understand that etiquette had been banished, as well as a great many women even of the highest rank, who were curious to know whether Camille Maupin's manly talent impaired her grace as a pretty woman, and to see, in a word, whether the trousers showed below her petticoats. After dinner till nine o'clock, when a collation was served, though the conversation had been gay and grave by turns, and constantly enlivened by Léon de Lora's sallies—for he is considered the most roguish wit of Paris to-day—and by the good taste which will surprise no one after the list of guests, literature had scarcely been mentioned. However, the butterfly flittings of this French tilting match were certain to come to it, were it only to flutter over this essentially French subject. But before coming to the turn in the conversation which led the Consul-General to speak, it will not be out of place to give some account of him and his family.

This diplomate, a man of four-and-thirty, who had been married about six years, was the living portrait of Lord Byron. The familiarity of that face makes a description of the Consul's unnecessary. It may, how-

ever, be noted that there was no affectation in his dreamy expression. Lord Byron was a poet, and the Consul was poetical; women know and recognise the difference, which explains without justifying some of their attachments. His handsome face, thrown into relief by a delightful nature, had captivated a Genoese heiress. A Genoese heiress! the expression might raise a smile at Genoa, where, in consequence of the inability of daughters to inherit, a woman is rarely rich; but Onorina Pedrotti, the only child of a banker without heirs male, was an exception. Notwithstanding all the flattering advances prompted by a spontaneous passion, the Consul-General had not seemed to wish to marry. Nevertheless, after living in the town for two years, and after certain steps taken by the Ambassador during his visits to the Genoese Court, the marriage was decided on. The young man withdrew his former refusal, less on account of the touching affection of Onorina Pedrotti than by reason of an unknown incident, one of those crises of private life which are so instantly buried under the daily tide of interests that, at a subsequent date, the most natural actions seem inexplicable.

This involution of causes sometimes affects the most serious events of history. This, at any rate, was the opinion of the town of Genoa, where, to some women, the extreme reserve, the melancholy of the French Consul could be explained only by the word passion. It may be remarked, in passing, that women never complain of being the victims of a preference; they are very ready to immolate themselves for the common weal. Onorina Pedrotti, who might have hated the Consul if she had been altogether scorned, loved her *sposo* no less, and perhaps more, when she knew that he had loved. Women allow precedence in love affairs. All is well if other women are in question.

A man is not a diplomate with impunity: the *sposo* was as secret as the grave—so secret that the merchants of

Genoa chose to regard the young Consul's attitude as premeditated, and the heiress might perhaps have slipped through his fingers if he had not played his part of a lovesick *malade imaginaire*. If it was real, the women thought it too degrading to be believed.

Pedrotti's daughter gave him her love as a consolation; she lulled these unknown griefs in a cradle of tenderness and Italian caresses.

Il Signor Pedrotti had indeed no reason to complain of the choice to which he was driven by his beloved child. Powerful protectors in Paris watched over the young diplomate's fortunes. In accordance with a promise made by the Ambassador to the Consul-General's father-in-law, the young man was created Baron and Commander of the Legion of Honour. Signor Pedrotti himself was made a Count by the King of Sardinia. Onorina's dower was a million of francs. As to the fortune of the Casa Pedrotti, estimated at two millions, made in the corn trade, the young couple came into it within six months of their marriage, for the first and last Count Pedrotti died in January 1831.

Onorina Pedrotti is one of those beautiful Genoese women who, when they are beautiful, are the most magnificent creatures in Italy. Michael Angelo took his models in Genoa for the tomb of Giuliano. Hence the fulness and singular placing of the breast in the figures of Day and Night, which so many critics have thought exaggerated, but which is peculiar to the women of Liguria. A Genoese beauty is no longer to be found excepting under the *mezzaro*, as at Venice it is met with only under the *fazzioli*. This phenomenon is observed among all fallen nations. The noble type survives only among the populace, as after the burning of a town coins are found hidden in the ashes. And Onorina, an exception as regards her fortune, is no less an exceptional patrician beauty. Recall to mind the figure of Night which Michael Angelo has placed at the feet of

the *Pensieroso*, dress her in modern garb, twist that long hair round the magnificent head, a little dark in complexion, set a spark of fire in those dreamy eyes, throw a scarf about the massive bosom, see the long dress, white, embroidered with flowers, imagine the statue sitting upright, with her arms folded like those of Mademoiselle Georges, and you will see before you the Consul's wife, with a boy of six, as handsome as a mother's desire, and a little girl of four on her knees, as beautiful as the type of childhood so laboriously sought out by the sculptor David to grace a tomb.

This beautiful family was the object of Camille's secret study. It struck Mademoiselle des Touches that the Consul looked rather too absent-minded for a perfectly happy man.

Although, throughout the day, the husband and wife had offered her the pleasing spectacle of complete happiness, Camille wondered why one of the most superior men she had ever met, and whom she had seen too in Paris drawing-rooms, remained as Consul-General at Genoa when he possessed a fortune of a hundred odd thousand francs a year. But, at the same time, she had discerned, by many of the little nothings which women perceive with the intelligence of the Arab sage in *Zadig*, that the husband was faithfully devoted. These two handsome creatures would no doubt love each other without a misunderstanding till the end of their days. So Camille said to herself alternately, 'What is wrong?—Nothing is wrong,' following the misleading symptoms of the Consul's demeanour; and he, it may be said, had the absolute calmness of Englishmen, of savages, of Orientals, and of consummate diplomatists.

In discussing literature, they spoke of the perennial stock-in-trade of the republic of letters—woman's sin. And they presently found themselves confronted by two opinions: When a woman sins, is the man or the woman to blame? The three women present—the Ambassadress,

the Consul's wife, and Mademoiselle des Touches, women, of course, of blameless reputations—were without pity for the woman. The men tried to convince these three fair flowers of their sex that some virtues might remain in a woman after she had fallen.

'How long are we going to play at hide-and-seek in this way?' said Léon de Lora.

'*Cara vita*, go and put your children to bed, and send me by Gina the little black pocket-book that lies on my Boule cabinet,' said the Consul to his wife.

She rose without a reply, which shows that she loved her husband very truly, for she already knew French enough to understand that her husband was getting rid of her.

'I will tell you a story in which I played a part, and after that we can discuss it, for it seems to me childish to practise with the scalpel on an imaginary body. Begin by dissecting a corpse.'

Every one prepared to listen, with all the greater readiness because they had all talked enough, and this is the moment to be chosen for telling a story. This, then, is the Consul-General's tale:—

'When I was two-and-twenty, and had taken my degree in law, my old uncle, the Abbé Loraux, then seventy-two years old, felt it necessary to provide me with a protector, and to start me in some career. This excellent man, if not indeed a saint, regarded each year of his life as a fresh gift from God. I need not tell you that the father confessor of a Royal Highness had no difficulty in finding a place for a young man brought up by himself, his sister's only child. So one day, towards the end of the year 1824, this venerable old man, who for five years had been Curé of the White Friars at Paris, came up to the room I had in his house, and said—

'"Get yourself dressed, my dear boy; I am going to introduce you to some one who is willing to engage you as secretary. If I am not mistaken, he may fill my place

in the event of God's taking me to Himself. I shall have finished mass by nine o'clock; you have three-quarters of an hour before you. Be ready."

'"What, uncle! must I say good-bye to this room, where for four years I have been so happy?'

'"I have no fortune to leave you," said he.

'"Have you not the reputation of your name to leave me, the memory of your good works—— ?"

'"We need say nothing of that inheritance," he replied, smiling. "You do not yet know enough of the world to be aware that a legacy of that kind is hardly likely to be paid, whereas by taking you this morning to M. le Comte—Allow me,' said the Consul, interrupting himself, 'to speak of my protector by his Christian name only, and to call him Comte Octave.—By taking you this morning to M. le Comte Octave, I hope to secure you his patronage, which, if you are so fortunate as to please that virtuous statesman—as I make no doubt you can—will be worth, at least, as much as the fortune I might have accumulated for you, if my brother-in-law's ruin and my sister's death had not fallen on me like a thunder-bolt from a clear sky."

'"Are you the Count's director?"

"'If I were, could I place you with him? What priest could be capable of taking advantage of the secrets which he learns at the tribunal of repentance? No; you owe this position to his Highness, the Keeper of the Seals. My dear Maurice, you will be as much at home there as in your father's house. The Count will give you a salary of two thousand four hundred francs, rooms in his house, and an allowance of twelve hundred francs in lieu of feeding you. He will not admit you to his table, nor give you a separate table, for fear of leaving you to the care of servants. I did not accept the offer when it was made to me till I was perfectly certain that Comte Octave's secretary was never to be a mere upper servant. You will have an immense amount of work, for the Count is a

great worker; but when you leave him, you will be qualified to fill the highest posts. I need not warn you to be discreet; that is the first virtue of any man who hopes to hold public appointments."

'You may conceive of my curiosity. Comte Octave, at that time, held one of the highest legal appointments; he was in the confidence of Madame the Dauphiness, who had just got him made a State Minister; he led such a life as the Comte de Sérizy, whom you all know, I think; but even more quietly, for his house was in the Marais, Rue Payenne, and he hardly ever entertained. His private life escaped public comment by its hermit-like simplicity and by constant hard work.

'Let me describe my position to you in a few words. Having found in the solemn headmaster of the Collége Saint-Louis a tutor to whom my uncle delegated his authority, at the age of eighteen I had gone through all the classes; I left school as innocent as a seminarist, full of faith, on quitting Saint-Sulpice. My mother, on her deathbed, had made my uncle promise that I should not become a priest, but I was as pious as though I had to take orders. On leaving college, the Abbé Loraux took me into his house and made me study law. During the four years of study requisite for passing all the examinations, I worked hard, but chiefly at things outside the arid fields of jurisprudence. Weaned from literature as I had been at college, where I lived in the headmaster's house, I had a thirst to quench. As soon as I had read a few modern masterpieces, the works of all the preceding ages were greedily swallowed. I became crazy about the theatre, and for a long time I went every night to the play, though my uncle gave me only a hundred francs a month. This parsimony, to which the good old man was compelled by his regard for the poor, had the effect of keeping a young man's desires within reasonable limits.

'When I went to live with Comte Octave I was not indeed an innocent, but I thought of my rare escapades as

crimes. My uncle was so truly angelic, and I was so much afraid of grieving him, that in all those four years I had never spent a night out. The good man would wait till I came in to go to bed. This maternal care had more power to keep me within bounds than the sermons and reproaches with which the life of a young man is diversified in a puritanical home. I was a stranger to the various circles which make up the world of Paris society; I only knew some women of the better sort, and none of the inferior class but those I saw as I walked about, or in the boxes at the play, and then only from the depths of the pit where I sat. If, at that period, any one had said to me, "You will see Canalis, or Camille Maupin," I should have felt hot coals in my head and in my bowels. Famous people were to me as gods, who neither spoke, nor walked, nor ate like other mortals.

'How many tales of the Thousand-and-one Nights are comprehended in the ripening of a youth! How many wonderful lamps must we have rubbed before we understand that the True Wonderful Lamp is either luck, or work, or genius. In some men this dream of the aroused spirit is but brief; mine has lasted until now! In those days I always went to sleep as Grand Duke of Tuscany,—as a millionaire,—as beloved by a princess,—or famous! So to enter the service of Comte Octave, and have a hundred louis a years, was entering on independent life. I had glimpses of some chance of getting into society, and seeking for what my heart desired most, a protectress, who would rescue me from the paths of danger, which a young man of two-and-twenty can hardly help treading, however prudent and well brought up he may be. I began to be afraid of myself.

'The persistent study of other people's rights into which I had plunged was not always enough to repress painful imaginings. Yes, sometimes in fancy I threw myself into theatrical life; I thought I could be a great actor; I dreamed of endless triumphs and loves, knowing nothing

of the disillusion hidden behind the curtain, as everywhere else—for every stage has its reverse behind the scenes. I have gone out sometimes, my heart boiling, carried away by an impulse to rush hunting through Paris, to attach myself to some handsome woman I might meet, to follow her to her door, watch her, write to her, throw myself on her mercy, and conquer her by sheer force of passion. My poor uncle, a heart consumed by charity, a child of seventy years, as clear-sighted as God, as guileless as a man of genius, no doubt read the tumult of my soul; for when he felt the tether by which he held me strained too tightly and ready to break, he would never fail to say, "Here, Maurice, you too are poor! Here are twenty francs; go and amuse yourself, you are not a priest!" And if you could then have seen the dancing light that gilded his grey eyes, the smile that relaxed his fine lips, puckering the corners of his mouth, the adorable expression of that august face, whose native ugliness was redeemed by the spirit of an apostle, you would understand the feeling which made me answer the Curé of White Friars only with a kiss, as if he had been my mother.

'"In Comte Octave you will find not a master, but a friend," said my uncle on the way to the Rue Payenne. "But he is distrustful, or to be more exact, he is cautious. The statesman's friendship can be won only with time; for in spite of his deep insight and his habit of gauging men, he was deceived by the man you are succeeding, and nearly became a victim to his abuse of confidence. This is enough to guide you in your behaviour to him."

'When we knocked at the enormous outer door of a house as large as the Hôtel Carnavalet, with a courtyard in front and a garden behind, the sound rang as in a desert. While my uncle inquired of an old porter in livery if the Count were at home, I cast my eyes, seeing everything at once, over the courtyard where the cobblestones were hidden in grass, the blackened walls where little gardens were flourishing above the decorations of

the elegant architecture, and on the roof, as high as that of the Tuileries. The balustrade of the upper balconies was eaten away. Through a magnificent colonnade I could see a second court on one side, where were the offices; the door was rotting. An old coachman was there cleaning an old carriage. The indifferent air of this servant allowed me to assume that the handsome stables, where of old so many horses had whinnied, now sheltered two at most. The handsome façade of the house seemed to me gloomy, like that of a mansion belonging to the State or the Crown, and given up to some public office. A bell rang as we walked across, my uncle and I, from the porter's lodge—*Enquire of the Porter* was still written over the door—towards the outside steps, where a footman came out in a livery like that of Labranche at the Théâtre Français in the old stock plays. A visitor was so rare that the servant was putting his coat on when he opened a glass door with small panes, on each side of which the smoke of a lamp had traced patterns on the walls.

'A hall so magnificent as to be worthy of Versailles ended in a staircase such as will never again be built in France, taking up as much space as the whole of a modern house. As we went up the marble steps, as cold as tombstones, and wide enough for eight persons to walk abreast, our tread echoed under sonorous vaulting. The banister charmed the eye by its miraculous workmanship—goldsmith's work in iron—wrought by the fancy of an artist of the time of Henri III. Chilled as by an icy mantle that fell on our shoulders, we went through ante-rooms, drawing-rooms opening one out of the other, with carpetless parquet floors, and furnished with such splendid antiquities as from thence would find their way to the curiosity dealers. At last we reached a large study in a cross wing, with all the windows looking into an immense garden.

'"Monsieur le Curé of the White Friars, and his

nephew, Monsieur de L'Hostal," said Labranche, to whose care the other theatrical servant had consigned us in the first antechamber.

'Comte Octave, dressed in long trousers and a grey flannel morning coat, rose from his seat by a huge writing-table, came to the fireplace, and signed to me to sit down, while he went forward to take my uncle's hands, which he pressed.

'"Though I am in the parish of Saint-Paul," said he, "I could scarcely have failed to hear of the Curé of the White Friars, and I am happy to make his acquaintance."

'"Your Excellency is most kind," replied my uncle. "I have brought to you my only remaining relation. While I believe that I am offering a good gift to your Excellency, I hope at the same time to give my nephew a second father."

'"As to that, I can only reply, Monsieur l'Abbé, when we shall have tried each other," said Comte Octave. "Your name ?" he added, to me.

'"Maurice."

'"He has taken his doctor's degree in law," my uncle observed.

'"Very good, very good !" said the Count, looking at me from head to foot. "Monsieur l'Abbé, I hope that for your nephew's sake in the first instance, and then for mine, you will do me the honour of dining here every Monday. That will be our family dinner, our family party."

'My uncle and the Count then began to talk of religion from the political point of view, of charitable institutes, the repression of crime, and I could at my leisure study the man on whom my fate would henceforth depend. The Count was of middle height ; it was impossible to judge of his build on account of his dress, but he seemed to me to be lean and spare. His face was harsh and hollow ; the features were refined. His mouth, which was rather large, expressed both irony and kindliness.

His forehead, perhaps too spacious, was as intimidating as that of a madman, all the more so from the contrast of the lower part of the face, which ended squarely in a short chin very near the lower lip. Small eyes, of turquoise blue, were as keen and bright as those of the Prince de Talleyrand—which I admired at a later time—and endowed, like the Prince's, with the faculty of becoming expressionless to the verge of gloom; and they added to the singularity of a face that was not pale but yellow. This complexion seemed to bespeak an irritable temper and violent passions. His hair, already silvered, and carefully dressed, seemed to furrow his head with streaks of black and white alternately. The trimness of this head spoiled the resemblance I had remarked in the Count to the wonderful monk described by Lewis after Schedoni in the *Confessional of the Black Penitents* (*The Italian*), a a superior creation, as it seems to me, to *The Monk*.

'The Count was already shaved, having to attend early at the law courts. Two candelabra with four lights, screened by lamp-shades, were still burning at the opposite ends of the writing-table, and showed plainly that the magistrate rose long before daylight. His hands, which I saw when he took hold of the bell-pull to summon his servant, were extremely fine, and as white as a woman's.

'As I tell you this story,' said the Consul-General, interrupting himself, 'I am altering the titles and the social position of this gentleman, while placing him in circumstances analogous to what his really were. His profession, rank, luxury, fortune, and style of living were the same; all these details are true, but I will not be false to my benefactor, nor to my usual habits of discretion.

'Instead of feeling—as I really was, socially speaking—an insect in the presence of an eagle,' the narrator went on after a pause, 'I felt I know not what indefinable impression from the Count's appearance, which, however, I can now account for. Artists of genius' (and he

bowed gracefully to the Ambassador, the distinguished lady, and the two Frenchmen), 'real statesmen, poets, a general who has commanded armies—in short, all really great minds are simple, and their simplicity places you on a level with themselves.—You who are all of superior minds,' he said, addressing his guests, 'have perhaps observed how feeling can bridge over the distances created by society. If we are inferior to you in intellect, we can be your equals in devoted friendship. By the temperature—allow me the word—of our hearts I felt myself as near my patron as I was far below him in rank. In short, the soul has its clairvoyance; it has presentiments of suffering, grief, joy, antagonism, or hatred in others.

'I vaguely discerned the symptoms of a mystery, from recognising in the Count the same effects of physiognomy as I had observed in my uncle. The exercise of virtue, serenity of conscience, and purity of mind had transfigured my uncle, who from being ugly had become quite beautiful. I detected a metamorphosis of a reverse kind in the Count's face; at the first glance I thought he was about fifty-five, but after an attentive examination I found youth entombed under the ice of a great sorrow, under the fatigue of persistent study, under the glowing hues of some suppressed passion. At a word from my uncle the Count's eyes recovered for a moment the softness of the periwinkle flower, and he had an admiring smile, which revealed what I believed to be his real age, about forty. These observations I made, not then but afterwards, as I recalled the circumstances of my visit.

'The man-servant came in carrying a tray with his master's breakfast on it.

'"I did not ask for breakfast," remarked the Count; "but leave it, and show Monsieur to his rooms."

'I followed the servant, who led the way to a complete set of pretty rooms, under a terrace, between the great courtyard and the servants' quarters, over a corridor of

communication between the kitchens and the grand staircase. When I returned to the Count's study, I overheard, before opening the door, my uncle pronouncing this judgment on me—

'" He may do wrong, for he has strong feelings, and we are all liable to honourable mistakes; but he has no vices."

'" Well," said the Count, with a kindly look, " do you like yourself there? Tell me. There are so many rooms in this barrack that, if you were not comfortable, I could put you elsewhere."

'" At my uncle's I had but one room," replied I.

'" Well, you can settle yourself this evening," said the Count, " for your possessions, no doubt, are such as all students own, and a hackney coach will be enough to convey them. To-day we will all three dine together," and he looked at my uncle.

' A splendid library opened from the Count's study, and he took us in there, showing me a pretty little recess decorated with paintings, which had formerly served, no doubt, as an oratory.

'" This is your cell," said he. " You will sit there when you have to work with me, for you will not be tethered by a chain;" and he explained in detail the kind and duration of my employment with him. As I listened I felt that he was a great political teacher.

'It took me about a month to familiarise myself with people and things, to learn the duties of my new office, and accustom myself to the Count's methods. A secretary necessarily watches the man who makes use of him. That man's tastes, passions, temper, and manias become the subject of involuntary study. The union of their two minds is at once more and less than a marriage.

'During these months the Count and I reciprocally studied each other. I learned with astonishment that Comte Octave was but thirty-seven years old. The

merely superficial peacefulness of his life and the propriety of his conduct were the outcome not solely of a deep sense of duty and of stoical reflection; in my constant intercourse with this man—an extraordinary man to those who knew him well—I felt vast depths beneath his toil, beneath his acts of politeness, his mask of benignity, his assumption of resignation, which so closely resembled calmness that it was easy to mistake it. Just as when walking through forest-lands certain soils give forth under our feet a sound which enables us to guess whether they are dense masses of stone or a void; so intense egoism, though hidden under the flowers of politeness, and subterranean caverns eaten out by sorrow sound hollow under the constant touch of familiar life. It was sorrow and not despondency that dwelt in that really great soul. The Count had understood that action, deeds, are the supreme law of social man. And he went on his way in spite of secret wounds, looking to the future with a tranquil eye, like a martyr full of faith.

'His concealed sadness, the bitter disenchantment from which he suffered, had not led him into philosophical deserts of incredulity; this brave statesman was religious, but without ostentation; he always attended the earliest mass at Saint-Paul's for pious workmen and servants. Not one of his friends, no one at Court, knew that he so punctually fulfilled the practice of religion. He was addicted to God as some men are addicted to a vice, with the greatest mystery. Thus one day I came to find the Count at the summit of an Alp of woe much higher than that on which many are who think themselves the most tried; who laugh at the passions and the beliefs of others because they have conquered their own; who play variations in every key of irony and disdain. He did not mock at those who still follow hope into the swamps whither she leads, nor those who climb a peak to be alone, nor those who persist in the fight, reddening the arena with their blood and strewing it with their illusions.

He looked on the world as a whole ; he mastered its beliefs; he listened to its complaining ; he was doubtful of affection, and yet more of self-sacrifice ; but this great and stern judge pitied them, or admired them, not with transient enthusiasm, but with silence, concentration, and the communion of a deeply-touched soul. He was a sort of catholic Manfred, and unstained by crime, carrying his choiceness into his faith, melting the snows by the fires of a sealed volcano, holding converse with a star seen by himself alone !

'I detected many dark riddles in his ordinary life. He evaded my gaze not like a traveller who, following a path, disappears from time to time in dells or ravines according to the formation of the soil, but like a sharp-shooter who is being watched, who wants to hide himself, and seeks a cover. I could not account for his frequent absences at the times when he was working the hardest, and of which he made no secret from me, for he would say, "Go on with this for me," and trust me with the work in hand.

'This man, wrapped in the threefold duties of the statesman, the judge, and the orator, charmed me by a taste for flowers, which shows an elegant mind, and which is shared by almost all persons of refinement. His garden and his study were full of the rarest plants, but he always bought them half-withered. Perhaps it pleased him to see such an image of his own fate ! He was faded like these dying flowers, whose almost decaying fragrance mounted strangely to his brain. The Count loved his country ; he devoted himself to public interests with the frenzy of a heart that seeks to cheat some other passion ; but the studies and work into which he threw himself were not enough for him ; there were frightful struggles in his mind, of which some echoes reached me. Finally, he would give utterance to harrowing aspirations for happiness, and it seemed to me he ought yet to be happy ; but what was the obstacle ? Was there a woman he

loved? This was a question I asked myself. You may imagine the extent of the circles of torment that my mind had searched before coming to so simple and so terrible a question. Notwithstanding his efforts, my patron did not succeed in stifling the movements of his heart. Under his austere manner, under the reserve of the magistrate, a passion rebelled, though coerced with such force that no one but I who lived with him ever guessed the secret. His motto seemed to be, "I suffer, and am silent." The escort of respect and admiration which attended him; the friendship of workers as valiant as himself—Grandville and Sérizy, both presiding judges—had no hold over the Count: either he told them nothing, or they knew all. Impassible and lofty in public, the Count betrayed the man only on rare intervals when, alone in his garden or his study, he supposed himself unobserved; but then he was a child again, he gave course to the tears hidden beneath the toga, to the excitement which, if wrongly interpreted, might have damaged his credit for perspicacity as a statesman.

'When all this had become to me a matter of certainty, Comte Octave had all the attractions of a problem, and won on my affection as much as though he had been my own father. Can you enter into the feeling of curiosity, tempered by respect? What catastrophe had blasted this learned man, who, like Pitt, had devoted himself from the age of eighteen to the studies indispensable to power, while he had no ambition; this judge, who thoroughly knew the law of nations, political law, civil and criminal law, and who could find in these a weapon against every anxiety, against every mistake; this profound legislator, this serious writer, this pious celibate whose life sufficiently proved that he was open to no reproach? A criminal could not have been more hardly punished by God than was my master; sorrow had robbed him of half his slumbers; he never slept more than four hours. What struggle was it that went on in the depths

of these hours apparently so calm, so studious, passing without a sound or a murmur, during which I often detected him, when the pen had dropped from his fingers, with his head resting on one hand, his eyes like two fixed stars, and sometimes wet with tears? How could the waters of that living spring flow over the burning strand without being dried up by the subterranean fire? Was there below it, as there is under the sea, between it and the central fires of the globe, a bed of granite? And would the volcano burst at last?

'Sometimes the Count would give me a look of that sagacious and keen-eyed curiosity by which one man searches another when he desires an accomplice; then he shunned my eye as he saw it open a mouth, so to speak, insisting on a reply, and seeming to say, "Speak first!" Now and then Comte Octave's melancholy was surly and gruff. If these spurts of temper offended me, he could get over it without thinking of asking my pardon; but then his manners were gracious to the point of Christian humility.

'When I became attached like a son to this man—to me such a mystery, but so intelligible to the outer world, to whom the epithet eccentric is enough to account for all the enigmas of the heart—I changed the state of the house. Neglect of his own interests was carried by the Count to the length of folly in the management of his affairs. Possessing an income of about a hundred and sixty thousand francs, without including the emoluments of his appointments—three of which did not come under the law against plurality—he spent sixty thousand, of which at least thirty thousand went to his servants. By the end of the first year I had got rid of all these rascals, and begged His Excellency to use his influence in helping me to get honest servants. By the end of the second year the Count, better fed and better served, enjoyed the comforts of modern life; he had fine horses, supplied by a coachman to whom I paid so much a month for each

horse; his dinners on his reception days, furnished by Chevet at a price agreed upon, did him credit; his daily meals were prepared by an excellent cook found by my uncle, and helped by two kitchenmaids. The expenditure for housekeeping, not including purchases, was no more than thirty thousand francs a year; we had two additional men-servants, whose care restored the poetical aspect of the house; for this old palace, splendid even in its rust, had an air of dignity which neglect had dishonoured.

'"I am no longer astonished," said he, on hearing of these results, "at the fortunes made by my servants. In seven years I have had two cooks, who have become rich restaurant-keepers."

'"And in seven years you have lost a hundred thousand francs," replied I. "You, a judge, who in your court sign summonses against crime, encouraged robbery in your own house."

'Early in the year 1826 the Count had, no doubt, ceased to watch me, and we were as closely attached as two men can be when one is subordinate to the other. He had never spoken to me of my future prospects, but he had taken an interest, both as a master and as a father, in training me. He often required me to collect materials for his most arduous labours; I drew up some of his reports, and he corrected them, showing the difference between his interpretation of the law, his views and mine. When at last I had produced a document which he could give in as his own he was delighted; this satisfaction was my reward, and he could see that I took it so. This little incident produced an extraordinary effect on a soul which seemed so stern. The Count pronounced sentence on me, to use a legal phrase, as supreme and royal judge; he took my head in his hands, and kissed me on the forehead.

'"Maurice," he exclaimed, "you are no longer my apprentice; I know not yet what you will be to me—

but if no change occurs in my life, perhaps you will take the place of a son."

'Comte Octave had introduced me to the best houses in Paris, whither I went in his stead, with his servants and carriage, on the too frequent occasions when, on the point of starting, he changed his mind, and sent for a hackney cab to take him—Where?—that was the mystery. By the welcome I met with I could judge of the Count's feelings towards me, and the earnestness of his recommendations. He supplied all my wants with the thoughtfulness of a father, and with all the greater liberality because my modesty left it to him always to think of me. Towards the end of January 1827, at the house of the Comtesse de Sérizy, I had such persistent ill-luck at play that I lost two thousand francs, and I would not draw them out of my savings. Next morning I asked myself, "Had I better ask my uncle for the money, or put my confidence in the Count?"

'I decided on the second alternative.

'"Yesterday," said I, when he was at breakfast, "I lost persistently at play; I was provoked, and went on; I owe two thousand francs. Will you allow me to draw the sum on account of my year's salary?"

'"No," said he, with the sweetest smile; "when a man plays in society, he must have a gambling purse. Draw six thousand francs; pay your debts. Henceforth we must go halves; for since you are my representative on most occasions, your self-respect must not be made to suffer for it."

'I made no speech of thanks. Thanks would have been superfluous between us. This shade shows the character of our relations. And yet we had not yet unlimited confidence in each other; he did not open to me the vast subterranean chambers which I had detected in his secret life; and I, for my part, never said to him, "What ails you? From what are you suffering?"

'What could he be doing during those long evenings?

He would often come in on foot or in a hackney cab when I returned in a carriage—I, his secretary! Was so pious a man a prey to vices hidden under hypocrisy? Did he expend all the powers of his mind to satisfy a jealousy more dexterous than Othello's? Did he live with some woman unworthy of him? One morning, on returning from I have forgotten what shop, where I had just paid a bill, between the Church of Saint-Paul and the Hôtel de Ville, I came across Comte Octave in such eager conversation with an old woman that he did not see me. The appearance of this hag filled me with strange suspicions, suspicions that were all the better founded because I never found that the Count invested his savings. Is it not shocking to think of? I was constituting myself my patron's censor. At that time I knew that he had more than six hundred thousand francs to invest; and if he had bought securities of any kind, his confidence in me was so complete in all that concerned his pecuniary interests, that I certainly should have known it.

'Sometimes, in the morning, the Count took exercise in his garden, to and fro, like a man to whom a walk is the hippogryph ridden by dreamy melancholy. He walked and walked! And he rubbed his hands enough to rub the skin off. And then, if I met him unexpectedly as he came to the angle of a path, I saw his face beaming. His eyes, instead of the hardness of a turquoise, had that velvety softness of the blue periwinkle, which had so much struck me on the occasion of my first visit, by reason of the astonishing contrast in the two different looks: the look of a happy man, and the look of an unhappy man. Two or three times at such a moment he had taken me by the arm and led me on; then he had said, "What have you come to ask?" instead of pouring out his joy into my heart that opened to him. But more often, especially since I could do his work for him and write his reports, the unhappy man would sit for hours staring at

the gold fish that swarmed in a handsome marble basin in the middle of the garden, round which grew an amphitheatre of the finest flowers. He, an accomplished statesman, seemed to have succeeded in making a passion of the mechanical amusement of crumbling bread to fishes.

'This is how the drama was disclosed of this second inner life, so deeply ravaged and storm-tossed, where, in a circle overlooked by Dante in his *Inferno*, horrible joys had their birth.'

The Consul-General paused.

'On a certain Monday,' he resumed, 'as chance would have it, M. le Président de Grandville and M. de Sérizy (at that time Vice-President of the Council of State) had come to hold a meeting at Comte Octave's house. They formed a committee of three, of which I was the secretary. The Count had already got me the appointment of Auditor to the Council of State. All the documents requisite for their inquiry into the political matter privately submitted to these three gentlemen were laid out on one of the long tables in the library. MM. de Grandville and de Sérizy had trusted to the Count to make the preliminary examination of the papers relating to the matter. To avoid the necessity for carrying all the papers to M. de Sérizy, as president of the commission, it was decided that they should meet first in the Rue Payenne. The Cabinet at the Tuileries attached great importance to this piece of work, of which the chief burthen fell on me—and to which I owed my appointment, in the course of that year, to be Master of Appeals.

'Though the Comtes de Grandville and de Sérizy, whose habits were much the same as my patron's, never dined away from home, we were still discussing the matter at a late hour, when we were startled by the man-servant calling me aside to say, "MM. the Curés of

Saint-Paul and of the White Friars have been waiting in the drawing-room for two hours."

'It was nine o'clock.

'"Well, gentlemen, you find yourselves compelled to dine with priests," said Comte Octave to his colleagues. "I do not know whether Grandville can overcome his horror of a priest's gown——"

'"It depends on the priest."

'"One of them is my uncle, and the other is the Abbé Gaudron," said I. "Do not be alarmed; the Abbé Fontanon is no longer second priest at Saint-Paul——"

'"Well, let us dine," replied the Président de Grandville. "A bigot frightens me, but there is no one so cheerful as a truly pious man."

'We went into the drawing-room. The dinner was delightful. Men of real information, politicians to whom business gives both consummate experience and the practice of speech, are admirable story-tellers, when they tell stories. With them there is no medium; they are either heavy, or they are sublime. In this delightful sport Prince Metternich is as good as Charles Nodier. The fun of a statesman, cut in facets like a diamond, is sharp, sparkling, and full of sense. Being sure that the proprieties would be observed by these three superior men, my uncle allowed his wit full play, a refined wit, gentle, penetrating, and elegant, like that of all men who are accustomed to conceal their thoughts under the black robe. And you may rely upon it, there was nothing vulgar nor idle in this light talk, which I would compare, for its effect on the soul, to Rossini's music.

'The Abbé Gaudron was, as M. de Grandville said, a Saint Peter rather than a Saint Paul, a peasant full of faith, as square on his feet as he was tall, a sacerdotal of whose ignorance in matters of the world and of literature enlivened the conversation by guileless amazement and unexpected questions. They came to talking of one of the plague spots of social life, of which we were just now

speaking—adultery. My uncle remarked on the contradiction which the legislators of the Code, still feeling the blows of the revolutionary storm, had established between civil and religious law, and which he said was at the root of all the mischief.

'"In the eyes of the Church," said he, "adultery is a crime; in those of your tribunals it is a misdemeanour. Adultery drives to the police court in a carriage instead of standing at the bar to be tried. Napoleon's Council of State, touched with tenderness towards erring women, was quite inefficient. Ought they not in this case to have harmonised the civil and the religious law, and have sent the guilty wife to a convent, as of old?"

'"To a convent!" said M. de Sérizy. "They must first have created convents, and in those days monasteries were being turned into barracks. Besides, think of what you say, M. l'Abbé—give to God what society would have none of?"

'"Oh!" said the Comte de Grandville, "you do not know France. They were obliged to leave the husband free to take proceedings: well, there are not ten cases of adultery brought up in a year."

'"M. l'Abbé preaches for his own saint, for it was Jesus Christ who invented adultery," said Comte Octave. "In the East, the cradle of the human race, woman was merely a luxury, and there was regarded as a chattel; no virtues were demanded of her but obedience and beauty. By exalting the soul above the body, the modern family in Europe—a daughter of Christ—invented indissoluble marriage, and made it a sacrament."

'"Ah! the Church saw all the difficulties," exclaimed M. de Grandville.

'"This institution has given rise to a new world," the Count went on with a smile. "But the practices of that world will never be that of a climate where women are marriageable at seven years of age, and more than old at five-and-twenty. The Catholic Church overlooked the

needs of half the globe. — So let us discuss Europe only.

'"Is woman our superior or our inferior? That is the real question so far as we are concerned. If woman is our inferior, by placing her on so high a level as the Church does, fearful punishments for adultery were needful. And formerly that was what was done. The cloister or death sums up early legislation. But since then practice has modified the law, as is always the case. The throne served as a hotbed for adultery, and the increase of this inviting crime marks the decline of the dogmas of the Catholic Church. In these days, in cases where the Church now exacts no more than sincere repentance from the erring wife, society is satisfied with a brand-mark instead of an execution. The law still condemns the guilty, but it no longer terrifies them. In short, there are two standards of morals: that of the world, and that of the Code. Where the Code is weak, as I admit with our dear Abbé, the world is audacious and satirical. There are so few judges who would not gladly have committed the fault against which they hurl the rather stolid thunders of their 'Inasmuch.' The world, which gives the lie to the law alike in its rejoicings, in its habits, and in its pleasures, is severer than the Code and the Church; the world punishes a blunder after encouraging hypocrisy. The whole economy of the law on marriage seems to me to require reconstruction from the bottom to the top. The French law would be perfect perhaps if it excluded daughters from inheriting."

'"We three among us know the question very thoroughly," said the Comte de Grandville with a laugh. "I have a wife I cannot live with. Sérizy has a wife who will not live with him. As for you, Octave, yours ran away from you. So we three represent every case of the conjugal conscience, and, no doubt, if ever divorce is brought in again, we shall form the committee."

'Octave's fork dropped on his glass, broke it, and broke his plate. He had turned as pale as death, and flashed a thunderous glare at M. de Grandville, by which he hinted at my presence, and which I caught.

'"Forgive me, my dear fellow. I did not see Maurice," the Président went on. "Sérizy and I, after being the witnesses to your marriage, became your accomplices; I did not think I was committing an indiscretion in the presence of these two venerable priests."

'M. de Sérizy changed the subject by relating all he had done to please his wife without ever succeeding. The old man concluded that it was impossible to regulate human sympathies and antipathies; he maintained that social law was never more perfect than when it was nearest to natural law. Now, Nature takes no account of the affinities of souls; her aim is fulfilled by the propagation of the species. Hence, the Code, in its present form, was wise in leaving a wide latitude to chance. The incapacity of daughters to inherit so long as there were male heirs was an excellent provision, whether to hinder the degeneration of the race, or to make households happier by abolishing scandalous unions and giving the sole preference to moral qualities and beauty.

'"But then," he exclaimed, lifting his hand with a gesture of disgust, "how are we to perfect legislation in a country which insists on bringing together seven or eight hundred legislators!—After all, if I am sacrificed," he added, "I have a child to succeed me."

'"Setting aside all the religious question," my uncle said, "I would remark to your Excellency that Nature only owes us life, and that it is society that owes us happiness. Are you a father?" asked my uncle.

'"And I—have I any children?" said Comte Octave in a hollow voice, and his tone made such an impression that there was no more talk of wives or marriage.

'When coffee had been served, the two Counts and the

two priests stole away, seeing that poor Octave had fallen into a fit of melancholy, which prevented his noticing their disappearance. My patron was sitting in an arm-chair by the fire, in the attitude of a man crushed.

'"You now know the secret of my life," said he to me on noticing that we were alone. "After three years of married life, one evening when I came in I found a letter in which the Countess announced her flight. The letter did not lack dignity, for it is in the nature of women to preserve some virtues even when committing that horrible sin.—The story now is that my wife went abroad in a ship that was wrecked; she is supposed to be dead. I have lived alone for seven years!—Enough for this evening, Maurice. We will talk of my situation when I have grown used to the idea of speaking of it to you. When we suffer from a chronic disease, it needs time to become accustomed to improvement. That improvement often seems to be merely another aspect of the complaint."

'I went to bed greatly agitated; for the mystery, far from being explained, seemed to me more obscure than ever. I foresaw some strange drama indeed, for I understood that there could be no vulgar difference between the woman the Count could choose and such a character as his. The events which had driven the Countess to leave a man so noble, so amiable, so perfect, so loving, so worthy to be loved, must have been singular, to say the least. M. de Grandville's remark had been like a torch flung into the caverns over which I had so long been walking; and though the flame lighted them but dimly, my eyes could perceive their wide extent! I could imagine the Count's sufferings without knowing their depth or their bitterness. That sallow face, those parched temples, those overwhelming studies, those moments of absent-mindedness, the smallest details of the life of this married bachelor, all stood out in luminous relief during the hour of mental questioning, which is, as

it were, the twilight before sleep, and to which any man would have given himself up, as I did.

'Oh ! how I loved my poor master ! He seemed to me sublime. I read a poem of melancholy, I saw perpetual activity in the heart I had accused of being torpid. Must not supreme grief always come at last to stagnation ? Had this judge, who had so much in his power, ever revenged himself? Was he feeding himself on her long agony ? Is it not a remarkable thing in Paris to keep anger always seething for ten years? What had Octave done since this great misfortune—for the separation of husband and wife is a great misfortune in our day, when domestic life has become a social question, which it never was of old ?

'We allowed a few days to pass on the watch, for great sorrows have a diffidence of their own ; but at last, one evening, the Count said in a grave voice—

'"Stay."

'This, as nearly as may be, is his story.

'"My father had a ward, rich and lovely, who was sixteen at the time when I came back from college to live in this old house. Honorine, who had been brought up by my mother, was just awaking to life. Full of grace and of childlike ways, she dreamed of happiness as she would have dreamed of jewels ; perhaps happiness seemed to her the jewels of the soul. Her piety was not free from puerile pleasures; for everything, even religion, was poetry to her ingenuous heart. She looked to the future as a perpetual fête. Innocent and pure, no delirium had disturbed her dream. Shame and grief had never tinged her cheek nor moistened her eye. She did not even inquire into the secret of her involuntary emotions on a fine spring day. And then, she felt that she was weak and destined to obedience, and she awaited marriage without wishing for it. Her smiling imagination knew nothing of the corruption—necessary perhaps

—which literature imparts by depicting the passions; she knew nothing of the world, and was ignorant of all the dangers of society. The dear child had suffered so little that she had not even developed her courage. In short, her guilelessness would have led her to walk fearless among serpents, like the ideal figure of Innocence a painter once created. We lived together like two brothers.

'"At the end of a year I said to her one day, in the garden of this house, by the basin, as we stood throwing crumbs to the fish—

'"'Would you like that we should be married? With me you could do whatever you please, while another man would make you unhappy.'

'"'Mamma,' said she to my mother, who came out to join us, 'Octave and I have agreed to be married——'

'"'What! at seventeen?' said my mother. 'No; you must wait eighteen months; and if eighteen months hence you like each other, well, your birth and fortunes are equal, you can make a marriage which is suitable, as well as being a love match.'

'"When I was six-and-twenty, and Honorine nineteen, we were married. Our respect for my father and mother, old folks of the Bourbon Court, hindered us from making this house fashionable, or renewing the furniture; we lived on, as we had done in the past, as children. However, I went into society; I initiated my wife into the world of fashion; and I regarded it as one of my duties to instruct her.

'"I recognised afterwards that marriages contracted under such circumstances as ours bear in themselves a rock against which many affections are wrecked, many prudent calculations, many lives. The husband becomes a pedagogue, or, if you like, a professor, and love perishes under the rod which, sooner or later, gives pain; for a young and handsome wife, at once discreet and laughter-loving, will not accept any superiority above that

with which she is endowed by nature. Perhaps I was in the wrong? During the difficult beginnings of a household I, perhaps, assumed a magisterial tone? On the other hand, I may have made the mistake of trusting too entirely to that artless nature; I kept no watch over the Countess, in whom revolt seemed to me impossible? Alas! neither in politics nor in domestic life has it yet been ascertained whether empires and happiness are wrecked by too much confidence or too much severity! Perhaps, again, the husband failed to realise Honorine's girlish dreams? Who can tell, while happy days last, what precepts he has neglected?"

'I remember only the broad outlines of the reproaches the Count addressed to himself, with all the good faith of an anatomist seeking the cause of a disease which might be overlooked by his brethren; but his merciful indulgence struck me then as really worthy of that of Jesus Christ when He rescued the woman taken in adultery.

'"It was eighteen months after my father's death—my mother followed him to the tomb in a few months—when the fearful night came which surprised me by Honorine's farewell letter. What poetic delusion had seduced my wife? Was it through her senses? Was it the magnetism of misfortune or of genius? Which of these powers had taken her by storm or misled her?—I would not know. The blow was so terrible, that for a month I remained stunned. Afterwards, reflection counselled me to continue in ignorance, and Honorine's misfortunes have since taught me too much about all these things.—So far, Maurice, the story is commonplace enough; but one word will change it all: I love Honorine, I have never ceased to worship her. From the day when she left me I have lived on memory; one by one I recall the pleasures for which Honorine no doubt had no taste.

'"Oh!" said he, seeing the amazement in my eyes, "do not make a hero of me, do not think me such a fool, as a Colonel of the Empire would say, as to have sought

no diversion. Alas, my boy! I was either too young or too much in love; I have not in the whole world met with another woman. After frightful struggles with myself, I tried to forget; money in hand, I stood on the very threshold of infidelity, but there the memory of Honorine rose before me like a white statue. As I recalled the infinite delicacy of that exquisite skin, through which the blood might be seen coursing and the nerves quivering; as I saw in fancy that ingenuous face, as guileless on the eve of my sorrows as on the day when I said to her, 'Shall we marry?' as I remembered a heavenly fragrance, the very odour of virtue, and the light in her eyes, the prettiness of her movements, I fled like a man preparing to violate a tomb, who sees emerging from it the transfigured soul of the dead. At consultations, in Court, by night, I dream so incessantly of Honorine that only by excessive strength of mind do I succeed in attending to what I am doing and saying. This is the secret of my labours.

'"Well, I felt no more anger with her than a father can feel on seeing his beloved child in some danger it has imprudently rushed into. I understood that I had made a poem of my wife—a poem I delighted in with such intoxication, that I fancied she shared the intoxication. Ah! Maurice, an indiscriminating passion in a husband is a mistake that may lead to any crime in a wife. I had no doubt left all the faculties of this child, loved as a child entirely unemployed; I had perhaps wearied her with my love before the hour of loving had struck for her! Too young to understand that in the constancy of the wife lies the germ of the mother's devotion, she mistook this first test of marriage for life itself, and the refractory child cursed life, unknown to me, not daring to complain to me, out of sheer modesty perhaps! In so cruel a position she would be defenceless against any man who stirred her deeply.—And I, so wise a judge as they say—I, who have a kind heart, but whose mind was absorbed

—I understood too late these unwritten laws of the woman's code, I read them by the light of the fire that wrecked my roof. Then I constituted my heart a tribunal by virtue of the law, for the law makes the husband a judge: I acquitted my wife, and I condemned myself. But love took possession of me as a passion, the mean, despotic passion which comes over some old men. At this day I love the absent Honorine as a man of sixty loves a woman whom he must possess at any cost, and yet I feel the strength of a young man. I have the insolence of the old man and the reserve of a boy.—My dear fellow, society only laughs at such a desperate conjugal predicament. Where it pities a lover, it regards a husband as ridiculously inept; it makes sport of those who cannot keep the woman they have secured under the canopy of the Church, and before the Maire's scarf of office. And I had to keep silence.

'"Sérizy is happy. His indulgence allows him to see his wife; he can protect and defend her; and, as he adores her, he knows all the perfect joys of a benefactor whom nothing can disturb, not even ridicule, for he pours it himself on his fatherly pleasures. 'I remain married only for my wife's sake,' he said to me one day on coming out of court.

'"But I—I have nothing; I have not even to face ridicule, I who live solely on a love which is starving! I who can never find a word to say to a woman of the world! I who loathe prostitution! I who am faithful under a spell!—But for my religious faith, I should have killed myself. I have defied the gulf of hard work; I have thrown myself into it, and come out again alive, fevered, burning, bereft of sleep!——"

'I cannot remember all the words of this eloquent man, to whom passion gave an eloquence indeed so far above that of the pleader that, as I listened to him, I, like him, felt my cheeks wet with tears. You may conceive of my feelings when, after a pause, during which

we dried them away, he finished his story with this revelation—

'"This is the drama of my soul, but it is not the actual living drama which is at this moment being acted in Paris! The interior drama interests nobody. I know it; and you will one day admit that it is so, you, who at this moment shed tears with me; no one can burden his heart or his skin with another's pain. The measure of our sufferings is in ourselves.—You even understand my sorrows only by very vague analogy. Could you see me calming the most violent frenzy of despair by the contemplation of a miniature in which I can see and kiss her brow, the smile on her lips, the shape of her face, can breathe the whiteness of her skin; which enables me almost to feel, to play with the black masses of her curling hair? Could you see me when I leap with hope—when I writhe under the myriad darts of despair—when I tramp through the mire of Paris to quell my irritation by fatigue? I have fits of collapse comparable to those of a consumptive patient, moods of wild hilarity, terrors as of a murderer who meets a sergeant of police. In short, my life is a continual paroxysm of fears, joy, and dejection.

'"As to the drama—it is this. You imagine that I am occupied with the Council of State, the Chamber, the Courts, Politics.—Why, dear me, seven hours at night are enough for all that, so much are my faculties overwrought by the life I lead! Honorine is my real concern. To recover my wife is my only study; to guard her in her cage, without her suspecting that she is in my power; to satisfy her needs, to supply the little pleasure she allows herself, to be always about her like a sylph without allowing her to see or to suspect me, for if she did, the future would be lost,—that is my life, my true life.—For seven years I have never gone to bed without going first to see the light of her night-lamp, or her shadow on the window curtains.

'"She left my house, choosing to take nothing but the dress she wore that day. The child carried her magnanimity to the point of folly! Consequently, eighteen months after her flight she was deserted by her lover, who was appalled by the cold, cruel, sinister, and revolting aspect of poverty—the coward! The man had, no doubt, counted on the easy and luxurious life in Switzerland or Italy which fine ladies indulge in when they leave their husbands. Honorine has sixty thousand francs a year of her own. The wretch left the dear creature expecting an infant, and without a penny. In the month of November 1820 I found means to persuade the best *accoucheur* in Paris to play the part of a humble suburban apothecary. I induced the priest of the parish in which the Countess was living to supply her needs as though he were performing an act of charity. Then to hide my wife, to secure her against discovery, to find her a housekeeper who would be devoted to me and be my intelligent confidante—it was a task worthy of Figaro! You may suppose that to discover where my wife had taken refuge I had only to make up my mind to it.

'"After three months of desperation rather than despair, the idea of devoting myself to Honorine with God only in my secret, was one of those poems which occur only to the heart of a lover through life and death! Love must have its daily food. And ought I not to protect this child, whose guilt was the outcome of my imprudence, against fresh disaster—to fulfil my part, in short, as a guardian angel?—At the age of seven months her infant died, happily for her and for me. For nine months more my wife lay between life and death, deserted at the time when she most needed a manly arm; but this arm," said he, holding out his own with a gesture of angelic dignity, "was extended over her head. Honorine was nursed as she would have been in her own home. When, on her recovery, she asked how and by whom she had been assisted, she was told—'By the

Sisters of Charity in the neighbourhood—by the Maternity Society—by the parish priest, who took an interest in her.'

'"This woman, whose pride amounts to a vice, has shown a power of resistance in misfortune, which on some evenings I call the obstinacy of a mule. Honorine was bent on earning her living. My wife works! For five years past I have lodged her in the Rue Saint-Maur, in a charming little house, where she makes artificial flowers and articles of fashion. She believes that she sells the product of her elegant fancy-work to a shop, where she is so well paid that she makes twenty francs a day, and in these six years she has never had a moment's suspicion. She pays for everything she needs at about the third of its value, so that on six thousand francs a year she lives as if she had fifteen thousand. She is devoted to flowers, and pays a hundred crowns to a gardener, who costs me twelve hundred in wages, and sends me in a bill for two thousand francs every three months. I have promised the man a market-garden with a house on it close to the porter's lodge in the Rue Saint-Maur. I hold this ground in the name of a clerk of the law courts. The smallest indiscretion would ruin the gardener's prospects. Honorine has her little house, a garden, and a splendid hothouse, for a rent of five hundred francs a year. There she lives under the name of her housekeeper, Madame Gobain, the old woman of impeccable discretion whom I was so lucky as to find, and whose affection Honorine has won. But her zeal, like that of the gardener, is kept hot by the promise of reward at the moment of success. The porter and his wife cost me dreadfully dear for the same reasons. However, for three years Honorine has been happy, believing that she owes to her own toil all the luxury of flowers, dress, and comfort.

'"Oh! I know what you are about to say," cried the Count, seeing a question in my eyes and on my lips. "Yes, yes; I have made the attempt. My wife was

formerly living in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. One day when, from what Gobain told me, I believed in some chance of a reconciliation, I wrote by post a letter, in which I tried to propitiate my wife—a letter written and re-written twenty times ! I will not describe my agonies. I went from the Rue Payenne to the Rue de Reuilly like a condemned wretch going from the Palais de Justice to his execution, but he goes on a cart, and I was on foot. It was dark—there was a fog ; I went to meet Madame Gobain, who was to come and tell me what my wife had done. Honorine, on recognising my writing, had thrown the letter into the fire without reading it.—'Madame Gobain,' she had exclaimed, 'I leave this to-morrow.'

'"What a dagger-stroke was this to a man who found inexhaustible pleasure in the trickery by which he gets the finest Lyons velvet at twelve francs a yard, a pheasant, a fish, a dish of fruit, for a tenth of their value, for a woman so ignorant as to believe that she is paying ample wages with two hundred and fifty francs to Madame Gobain, a cook fit for a bishop.

'"You have sometimes found me rubbing my hands in the enjoyment of a sort of happiness. Well, I had just succeeded in some ruse worthy of the stage. I had just deceived my wife—I had sent her by a purchaser of wardrobes an Indian shawl, to be offered to her as the property of an actress who had hardly worn it, but in which I—the solemn lawyer whom you know—had wrapped myself for a night ! In short, my life at this day may be summed up in the two words which express the extremes of torment—I love, and I wait ! I have in Madame Gobain a faithful spy on the heart I worship. I go every evening to chat with the old woman, to hear from her all that Honorine has done during the day, the lightest word she has spoken, for a single exclamation might betray to me the secrets of that soul which is wilfully deaf and dumb. Honorine is pious ; she attends

the Church services and prays, but she has never been to confession or taken the Communion; she foresees what a priest would tell her. She will not listen to the advice, to the injunction, that she should return to me. This horror of me overwhelms me, dismays me, for I have never done her the smallest harm. I have always been kind to her. Granting even that I may have been a little hasty when teaching her, that my man's irony may have hurt her legitimate girlish pride, is that a reason for persisting in a determination which only the most implacable hatred could have inspired? Honorine has never told Madame Gobain who she is; she keeps absolute silence as to her marriage, so that the worthy and respectable woman can never speak a word in my favour, for she is the only person in the house who knows my secret. The others know nothing; they live under the awe caused by the name of the Prefect of Police, and their respect for the power of a Minister. Hence it is impossible for me to penetrate that heart; the citadel is mine, but I cannot get into it. I have not a single means of action. An act of violence would ruin me for ever.

'"How can I argue against reasons of which I know nothing? Should I write a letter, and have it copied by a public writer, and laid before Honorine? But that would be to run the risk of a third removal. The last cost me fifty thousand francs. The purchase was made in the first instance in the name of the secretary whom you succeeded. The unhappy man, who did not know how lightly I sleep, was detected by me in the act of opening the box in which I had put the private agreement; I coughed, and he was seized with a panic; next day I compelled him to sell the house to the man in whose name it now stands, and I turned him out.

'"If it were not that I feel all my noblest faculties as a man satisfied, happy, expansive; if the part I am playing were not that of divine fatherhood; if I did not

drink in delight by every pore, there are moments when I should believe that I was a monomaniac. Sometimes at night I hear the jingling bells of madness. I dread the violent transitions from a feeble hope, which sometimes shines and flashes up, to complete despair, falling as low as man can fall. A few days since I was seriously considering the horrible end of the story of Lovelace and Clarissa Harlowe, and saying to myself, If Honorine were the mother of a child of mine, must she not necessarily return under her husband's roof?

'"And I have such complete faith in a happy future, that ten months ago I bought and paid for one of the handsomest houses in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. If I win back Honorine, I will not allow her to see this house again, nor the room from which she fled. I mean to place my idol in a new temple, where she may feel that life is altogether new. That house is being made a marvel of elegance and taste. I have been told of a poet who, being almost mad with love for an actress, bought the handsomest bed in Paris without knowing how the actress would reward his passion. Well, one of the coldest of lawyers, a man who is supposed to be the gravest adviser of the Crown, was stirred to the depths of his heart by that anecdote. The orator of the Legislative Chamber can understand the poet who fed his ideal on material possibilities. Three days before the arrival of Maria Louisa, Napoleon flung himself on his wedding bed at Compiègne. All stupendous passions have the same impulses. I love as a poet—as an emperor!"

'As I heard the last words, I believed that Comte Octave's fears were realised; he had risen, and was walking up and down, and gesticulating, but he stopped as if shocked by the vehemence of his own words.

'"I am very ridiculous," he added, after a long pause, looking at me, as if craving a glance of pity.

'"No, Monsieur, you are very unhappy."

'"Ah yes!" said he, taking up the thread of his

confidences. "From the violence of my speech you may, you must believe in the intensity of a physical passion which for nine years has absorbed all my faculties; but that is nothing in comparison with the worship I feel for the soul, the mind, the heart, all in that woman that is not mere woman; the enchanting divinities in the train of Love, with whom we pass our life, and who form the daily poem of a fugitive delight. By a phenomenon of retrospection I see now the graces of Honorine's mind and heart, to which I paid little heed in the time of my happiness—like all who are happy. From day to day I have appreciated the extent of my loss, discovering the exquisite gifts of that capricious and refractory young creature who has grown so strong and so proud under the heavy hand of poverty and the shock of the most cowardly desertion. And that heavenly blossom is fading in solitude and hiding!—Ah! The law of which we were speaking," he went on with bitter irony, "the law is a squad of gendarmes—my wife seized and dragged away by force! Would not that be to triumph over a corpse? Religion has no hold on her; she craves its poetry, she prays, but she does not listen to the commandments of the Church. I, for my part, have exhausted everything in the way of mercy, of kindness, of love; I am at my wits' end. Only one chance of victory is left to me: the cunning and patience with which bird-catchers at last entrap the wariest birds, the swiftest, the most capricious, and the rarest. Hence, Maurice, when M. de Grandville's indiscretion betrayed to you the secret of my life, I ended by regarding this incident as one of the decrees of fate, one of the utterances for which gamblers listen and pray in the midst of their most impassioned play. . . . Have you enough affection for me to show me romantic devotion?"

'"I see what you are coming to, Monsieur le Comte," said I, interrupting him; "I guess your purpose. Your first secretary tried to open your deed box. I know the

heart of your second—he might fall in love with your wife. And can you devote him to destruction by sending him into the fire? Can any one put his hand into a brazier without burning it?"

'"You are a foolish boy," replied the Count. "I will send you well gloved. It is no secretary of mine that will be lodged in the Rue Saint-Maur in the little garden-house which I have at his disposal. It is my distant cousin, Baron de L'Hostal, a lawyer high in office . . ."

'After a moment of silent surprise, I heard the gate bell ring, and a carriage came into the courtyard. Presently the footman announced Madame de Courteville and her daughter. The Count had a large family connection on his mother's side. Madame de Courteville, his cousin, was the widow of a judge on the bench of the Seine division, who had left her a daughter and no fortune whatever. What could a woman of nine-and-twenty be in comparison with a young girl of twenty, as lovely as imagination could wish for an ideal mistress?

'"Baron, and Master of Appeals, till you get something better, and this old house settled on her,—would not you have enough good reasons for not falling in love with the Countess?" he said to me in a whisper, as he took me by the hand and introduced me to Madame de Courteville and her daughter.

'I was dazzled, not so much by these advantages of which I had never dreamed, but by Amélie de Courteville, whose beauty was thrown into relief by one of those well-chosen toilets which a mother can achieve for a daughter when she wants to see her married.'

'But I will not talk of myself,' said the Consul after a pause.

'Three weeks later I went to live in the gardener's cottage, which had been cleaned, repaired, and furnished with the celerity which is explained by three words: Paris; French workmen; money! I was as much in love as the Count could possibly desire as a security.

Would the prudence of a young man of five-and-twenty be equal to the part I was undertaking, involving a friend's happiness? To settle that matter, I may confess that I counted very much on my uncle's advice; for I had been authorised by the Count to take him into confidence in any case where I deemed his interference necessary. I engaged a garden; I devoted myself to horticulture; I worked frantically, like a man whom nothing can divert, turning up the soil of the market-garden, and appropriating the ground to the culture of flowers. Like the maniacs of England, or of Holland, I gave it out that I was devoted to one kind of flower, and especially grew dahlias, collecting every variety. You will understand that my conduct, even in the smallest details, was laid down for me by the Count, whose whole intellectual powers were directed to the most trifling incidents of the tragi-comedy enacted in the Rue Saint-Maur. As soon as the Countess had gone to bed, at about eleven at night, Octave, Madame Gobain, and I sat in council. I heard the old woman's report to the Count of his wife's least proceedings during the day. He inquired into everything: her meals, her occupations, her frame of mind, her plans for the morrow, the flowers she proposed to imitate. I understood what love in despair may be when it is the threefold passion of the heart, the mind, and the senses. Octave lived only for that hour.

'During two months, while my work in the garden lasted, I never set eyes on the little house where my fair neighbour dwelt. I had not even inquired whether I had a neighbour, though the Countess's garden was divided from mine by a paling, along which she had planted cypress trees already four feet high. One fine morning Madame Gobain announced to her mistress, as a disastrous piece of news, the intention, expressed by an eccentric creature who had become her neighbour, of building a wall between the two gardens, at the end of the year. I will say nothing of the curiosity which

consumed me to see the Countess! The wish almost extinguished my budding love for Amélie de Courteville. My scheme for building a wall was indeed a serious threat. There would be no more fresh air for Honorine, whose garden would then be a sort of narrow alley shut in between my wall and her own little house. This dwelling, formerly a summer villa, was like a house of cards; it was not more than thirty feet deep, and about a hundred feet long. The garden front, painted in the German fashion, imitated a trellis with flowers up to the second floor, and was a really charming example of the Pompadour style, so well called rococo. A long avenue of limes led up to it. The gardens of the pavilion and my plot of ground were in the shape of a hatchet, of which this avenue was the handle. My wall would cut away three-quarters of the hatchet.

'The Countess was in despair.

'"My good Gobain," said she, "what sort of man is this florist?"

'"On my word," said the housekeeper, "I do not know whether it will be possible to tame him. He seems to have a horror of women. He is the nephew of a Paris curé. I have seen the uncle but once; a fine old man of sixty, very ugly, but very amiable. It is quite possible that this priest encourages his nephew, as they say in the neighbourhood, in his love of flowers, that nothing worse may happen——"

'"Why—what?"

'"Well, your neighbour is a little cracked!" said Gobain, tapping her head!

'Now a harmless lunatic is the only man whom no woman ever distrusts in the matter of sentiment. You will see how wise the Count had been in choosing this disguise for me.

'"What ails him then?" asked the Countess.

'"He has studied too hard," replied Gobain; "he has turned misanthropic. And he has his reasons for

disliking women—well, if you want to know all that is said about him——"

'"Well," said Honorine, "madmen frighten me less than sane folks; I will speak to him myself! Tell him that I beg him to come here. If I do not succeed, I will send for the curé."

'The day after this conversation, as I was walking along my gravelled path, I caught sight of the half-opened curtains on the first floor of the little house, and of a woman's face curiously peeping out. Madame Gobain called me. I hastily glanced at the Countess's house, and by a rude shrug expressed, "What do I care for your mistress!"

'"Madame," said Gobain, called upon to give an account of her errand, "the madman bid me leave him in peace, saying that even a charcoal seller is master in his own premises, especially when he has no wife."

'"He is perfectly right," said the Countess.

'"Yes, but he ended by saying, 'I will go,' when I told him that he would greatly distress a lady living in retirement, who found her greatest solace in growing flowers."

'Next day a signal from Gobain informed me that I was expected. After the Countess's breakfast, when she was walking to and fro in front of her house, I broke out some palings, and went towards her. I had dressed myself like a countryman, in an old pair of grey flannel trousers, heavy wooden shoes, and shabby shooting coat, a peaked cap on my head, a ragged bandana round my neck, hands soiled with mould, and a dibble in my hand.'

'"Madame," said the housekeeper, "this good man is your neighbour."

'The Countess was not alarmed. I saw at last the woman whom her own conduct and her husband's confidences had made me so curious to meet. It was in the early days of May. The air was pure, the weather serene; the verdure of the first foliage, the fragrance of spring

formed a setting for this creature of sorrow. As I then saw Honorine I understood Octave's passion and the truthfulness of his description, "A heavenly flower!"

'Her pallor was what first struck me by its peculiar tone of white—for there are as many tones of white as of red or blue. On looking at the Countess, the eye seemed to feel that tender skin, where the blood flowed in the blue veins. At the slightest emotion the blood mounted under the surface in rosy flushes like a cloud. When we met, the sunshine, filtering through the light foliage of the acacias, shed on Honorine the pale gold, ambient glory in which Raphael and Titian, alone of all painters, have been able to enwrap the Virgin. Her brown eyes expressed both tenderness and vivacity; their brightness seemed reflected in her face through the long downcast lashes. Merely by lifting her delicate eyelids, Honorine could cast a spell; there was so much feeling, dignity, terror, or contempt in her way of raising or dropping those veils of the soul. She could freeze or give life by a look. Her light-brown hair, carelessly knotted on her head, outlined a poet's brow, high, powerful, and dreamy. The mouth was wholly voluptuous. And to crown all by a grace, rare in France, though common in Italy, all the lines and forms of the head had a stamp of nobleness which would defy the outrages of time.

'Though slight, Honorine was not thin, and her figure struck me as being one that might revive love when it believed itself exhausted. She perfectly represented the idea conveyed by the word *mignonne*, for she was one of those pliant little women who allow themselves to be taken up, petted, set down, and taken up again like a kitten. Her small feet, as I heard them on the gravel, made a light sound essentially their own, that harmonised with the rustle of her dress, producing a feminine music which stamped itself on the heart, and remained distinct from the footfall of a thousand other women. Her gait bore all the quarterings of her race with so much pride, that, in

the street, the least respectful working man would have made way for her. Gay and tender, haughty and imposing, it was impossible to understand her, excepting as gifted with these apparently incompatible qualities, which, nevertheless, had left her still a child. But it was a child who might be as strong as an angel; and, like the angel, once hurt in her nature, she would be implacable.

'Coldness on that face must no doubt be death to those on whom her eyes had smiled, for whom her set lips had parted, for those whose soul had drunk in the melody of that voice, lending to her words the poetry of song by its peculiar intonation. Inhaling the perfume of violets that accompanied her, I understood how the memory of this wife had arrested the Count on the threshold of debauchery, and how impossible it would be ever to forget a creature who really was a flower to the touch, a flower to the eye, a flower of fragrance, a heavenly flower to the soul. . . . Honorine inspired devotion, chivalrous devotion, regardless of reward. A man on seeing her must say to himself—

'"Think, and I will divine your thought; speak, and I will obey. If my life, sacrificed in torments, can procure you one day's happiness, take my life; I will smile like a martyr at the stake, for I shall offer that day to God, as a token to which a father responds on recognising a gift to his child." Many women study their expression, and succeed in producing effects similar to those which would have struck you at first sight of the Countess; only, in her, it all was the outcome of a delightful nature, that inimitable nature went at once to the heart. If I tell you all this, it is because her soul, her thoughts, the exquisiteness of her heart, are all we are concerned with, and you would have blamed me if I had not sketched them for you.

'I was very near forgetting my part as a half-crazy lout, clumsy, and by no means chivalrous.

'"I am told, Madame, that you are fond of flowers?"

'" I am an artificial flower-maker," said she. " After growing flowers, I imitate them, like a mother who is artist enough to have the pleasure of painting portraits of her children. . . . That is enough to tell you that I am poor and unable to pay for the concession I am anxious to obtain from you ? "

'" But how," said I, as grave as a judge, " can a lady of such rank as yours would seem to be, ply so humble a calling ? Have you, like me, good reasons for employing your fingers so as to keep your brains from working ? "

'" Let us stick to the question of the wall," said she, with a smile.

'" Why, we have begun at the foundations," said I. " Must not I know which of us ought to yield to the other in behalf of our suffering, or, if you choose, of our mania ? —Oh ! what a charming clump of narcissus ! They are as fresh as this spring morning ! "

'I assure you, she had made for herself a perfect museum of flowers and shrubs, which none might see but the sun, and of which the arrangement had been prompted by the genius of an artist ; the most heartless of landlords must have treated it with respect. The masses of plants, arranged according to their height, or in single clumps, were really a joy to the soul. This retired and solitary garden breathed comforting scents, and suggested none but sweet thoughts and graceful, nay, voluptuous pictures. On it was set that inscrutable sign-manual, which our true character stamps on everything, as soon as nothing compels us to obey the various hypocrisies, necessary as they are, which Society insists on. I looked alternately at the mass of narcissus and at the Countess, affecting to be far more in love with the flowers than with her, to carry out my part.

'" So you are very fond of flowers ? " said she.

'" They are," I replied, " the only beings that never disappoint our cares and affection." And I went on to

deliver such a diatribe while comparing botany and the world, that we ended miles away from the dividing wall, and the Countess must have supposed me to be a wretched and wounded sufferer worthy of her pity. However, at the end of half an hour my neighbour naturally brought me back to the point; for women, when they are not in love, have all the cold blood of an experienced attorney.

'"If you insist on my leaving the paling," said I, "you will learn all the secrets of gardening that I want to hide; I am seeking to grow a blue dahlia, a blue rose; I am crazy for blue flowers. Is not blue the favourite colour of superior souls? We are neither of us really at home; we might as well make a little door of open railings to unite our gardens. . . . You, too, are fond of flowers; you will see mine, I shall see yours. If you receive no visitors at all, I, for my part, have none but my uncle, the Curé of the White Friars."

'"No," said she, "I will give you the right to come into my garden, my premises, at any hour. Come and welcome; you will always be admitted as a neighbour with whom I hope to keep on good terms. But I like my solitude too well to burden it with any loss of independence.'

'"As you please," said I, and with one leap I was over the paling.

'"Now, of what use would a door be?" said I, from my own domain, turning round to the Countess, and mocking her with a madman's gesture and grimace.

'For a fortnight I seemed to take no heed of my neighbour. Towards the end of May, one lovely evening, we happened both to be out on opposite sides of the paling, both walking slowly. Having reached the end, we could not help exchanging a few civil words; she found me in such deep dejection, lost in such painful meditations, that she spoke to me of hopefulness, in brief sentences that sounded like the songs with which

nurses lull their babies. I then leaped the fence, and found myself for the second time at her side. The Countess led me into the house, wishing to subdue my sadness. So at last I had penetrated the sanctuary where everything was in harmony with the woman I have tried to describe to you.

'Exquisite simplicity reigned there. The interior of the little house was just such a dainty box as the art of the eighteenth century devised for the pretty profligacy of a fine gentleman. The dining-room, on the ground floor, was painted in fresco, with garlands of flowers, admirably and marvellously executed. The staircase was charmingly decorated in monochrome. The little drawing-room, opposite the dining-room, was very much faded; but the Countess had hung it with panels of tapestry of fanciful designs, taken off old screens. A bath-room came next. Upstairs there was but one bed-room, with a dressing-room, and a library which she used as her workroom. The kitchen was beneath in the basement on which the house was raised, for there was a flight of several steps outside. The balustrade of a balcony in garlands à la Pompadour concealed the roof; only the lead cornices were visible. In this retreat one was a hundred leagues from Paris.

'But for the bitter smile which occasionally played on the beautiful red lips of this pale woman, it would have been possible to believe that this violet buried in her thicket of flowers was happy. In a few days we had reached a certain degree of intimacy, the result of our close neighbourhood and of the Countess's conviction that I was indifferent to women. A look would have spoilt all, and I never allowed a thought of her to be seen in my eyes. Honorine chose to regard me as an old friend. Her manner to me was the outcome of a kind of pity. Her looks, her voice, her words, all showed that she was a hundred miles away from the coquettish airs which the strictest virtue might have allowed under

such circumstances. She soon gave me the right to go into the pretty workshop where she made her flowers, a retreat full of books and curiosities, as smart as a boudoir where elegance emphasised the vulgarity of the tools of her trade. The Countess had in the course of time poetised, as I may say, a thing which is at the antipodes to poetry—a manufacture.

'Perhaps of all the work a woman can do, the making of artificial flowers is that of which the details allow her to display most grace. For colouring prints she must sit bent over a table and devote herself, with some attention, to this half painting. Embroidering tapestry, as diligently as a woman must who is to earn her living by it, entails consumption or curvature of the spine. Engraving music is one of the most laborious, by the care, the minute exactitude, and the intelligence it demands. Sewing and white embroidery do not earn thirty sous a day. But the making of flowers and light articles of wear necessitates a variety of movements, gestures, ideas even, which do not take a pretty woman out of her sphere; she is still herself; she may chat, laugh, sing, or think.

'There was certainly a feeling for art in the way in which the Countess arranged on a long deal table the myriad-coloured petals which were used in composing the flowers she was to produce. The saucers of colour were of white china, and always clean, arranged in such order that the eye could at once see the required shade in the scale of tints. Thus the aristocratic artist saved time. A pretty little cabinet with a hundred tiny drawers, of ebony inlaid with ivory, contained the little steel moulds in which she shaped the leaves and some forms of petals. A fine Japanese bowl held the paste, which was never allowed to turn sour, and it had a fitted cover with a hinge so easy that she could lift it with a finger-tip. The wire, of iron and brass, lurked in a little drawer of the table before her.


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'Under her eyes, in a Venetian glass, shaped like a flower-cup on its stem, was the living model she strove to imitate. She had a passion for achievement; she attempted the most difficult things, close racemes, the tiniest corollas, heaths, nectaries of the most variegated hues. Her hands, as swift as her thoughts, went from the table to the flower she was making, as those of an accomplished pianist fly over the keys. Her fingers seemed to be fairies, to use Perrault's expression, so infinite were the different actions of twisting, fitting, and pressure needed for the work, all hidden under grace of movement, while she adapted each motion to the result with the lucidity an instinct.

'I could not tire of admiring her as she shaped a flower from the materials sorted before her, padding the wire stem and adjusting the leaves. She displayed the genius of a painter in her bold attempts; she copied faded flowers and yellowing leaves; she struggled even with wildflowers, the most artless of all, and the most elaborate in their simplicity.

'"This art," she would say, "is in its infancy. If the women of Paris had a little of the genius which the slavery of the harem brings out in Oriental women, they would lend a complete language of flowers to the wreaths they wear on their head. To please my own taste as an artist I have made drooping flowers with leaves of the hue of Florentine bronze, such as are found before or after the winter. Would not such a crown on the head of a young woman whose life is a failure have a certain poetical fitness? How many things a woman might express by her head-dress! Are there not flowers for drunken Bacchantes, flowers for gloomy and stern bigots, pensive flowers for women who are bored? Botany, I believe, may be made to express every sensation and thought of the soul, even the most subtle?"

'She would employ me to stamp out the leaves, cut up material, and prepare wires for the stems. My affected

desire for occupation made me soon skilful. We talked as we worked. When I had nothing to do, I read new books to her, for I had my part to keep up as a man weary of life, worn out with griefs, gloomy, sceptical, and soured. My person led to adorable banter as to my purely physical resemblance—with the exception of his club foot—to Lord Byron. It was tacitly acknowledged that her own troubles, as to which she kept the most profound silence, far outweighed mine, though the causes I assigned for my misanthropy might have satisfied Young or Job.

'I will say nothing of the feelings of shame which tormented me as I inflicted on my heart, like the beggars in the street, false wounds to excite the compassion of that enchanting woman. I soon appreciated the extent of my devotedness by learning to estimate the baseness of a spy. The expressions of sympathy bestowed on me would have comforted the greatest grief. This charming creature, weaned from the world, and for so many years alone, having, besides love, treasures of kindliness to bestow, offered these to me with childlike effusiveness and such compassion as would inevitably have filled with bitterness any profligate who should have fallen in love with her; for, alas, it was all charity, all sheer pity. Her renunciation of love, her dread of what is called happiness for women, she proclaimed with equal vehemence and candour. These happy days proved to me that a woman's friendship is far superior to her love.

'I suffered the revelations of my sorrows to be dragged from me with as many grimaces as a young lady allows herself before sitting down to the piano, so conscious are they of the annoyance that will follow. As you may imagine, the necessity for overcoming my dislike to speak had induced the Countess to strengthen the bonds of our intimacy; but she found in me so exact a counterpart of her own antipathy to love, that I fancied she was well content with the chance which had

brought to her desert island a sort of Man Friday. Solitude was perhaps beginning to weigh on her. At the same time, there was nothing of the coquette in her; nothing survived of the woman; she did not feel that she had a heart, she told me, excepting in the ideal world where she found refuge. I involuntarily compared these two lives—hers and the Count's:—his, all activity, agitation, and emotion; hers, all inaction, quiescence, and stagnation. The woman and the man were admirably obedient to their nature. My misanthropy allowed me to utter cynical sallies against men and women both, and I indulged in them, hoping to bring Honorine to the confidential point; but she was not to be caught in any trap, and I began to understand that mulish obstinacy which is commoner among women than is generally supposed.

'"The Orientals are right," I said to her one evening, "when they shut you up and regard you merely as the playthings of their pleasure. Europe has been well punished for having admitted you to form an element of society and for accepting you on an equal footing. In my opinion, woman is the most dishonourable and cowardly being to be found. Nay, and that is where her charm lies. Where would be the pleasure of hunting a tame thing? When once a woman has inspired a man's passion, she is to him for ever sacred; in his eyes she is hedged round by an imprescriptible prerogative. In men gratitude for past delights is eternal. Though he should find his mistress grown old or unworthy, the woman still has rights over his heart; but to you women the man you have loved is as nothing to you; nay, more, he is unpardonable in one thing—he lives on! You dare not own it, but you all have in your hearts the feeling which that popular calumny called tradition ascribes to the Lady of the Tour de Nesle: 'What a pity it is that we cannot live on love as we live on fruit, and that when we have had our fill,

nothing should survive but the remembrance of pleasure!"

'"God has, no doubt, reserved such perfect bliss for Paradise," said she. "But," she added, "if your argument seems to you very witty, to me it has the disadvantage of being false. What can those women be who give themselves up to a succession of loves?" she asked, looking at me as the Virgin in Ingres' picture looks at Louis XIII. offering her his kingdom.

'"You are an actress in good faith," said I, "for you gave me a look just now which would make the fame of an actress. Still, lovely as you are, you have loved; *ergo*, you forget."

'"I!" she exclaimed, evading my question, "I am not a woman. I am a nun, and seventy-two years old!"

'"Then, how can you so positively assert that you feel more keenly than I? Sorrow has but one form for women. The only misfortunes they regard are disappointments of the heart."

'She looked at me sweetly, and, like all women when stuck between the issues of a dilemna, or held in the clutches of truth, she persisted, nevertheless, in her wilfulness.

'"I am a nun," she said, "and you talk to me of a world where I shall never again set foot."

'"Not even in thought?" said I.

'"Is the world so much to be desired?" she replied. "Oh! when my mind wanders, it goes higher. The angel of perfection, the beautiful angel Gabriel, often sings in my heart. If I were rich, I should work, all the same, to keep me from soaring too often on the many-tinted wings of the angel, and wandering in the world of fancy. There are meditations which are the ruin of us women! I owe much peace of mind to my flowers, though sometimes they fail to occupy me. On some days I find my soul invaded by a purposeless expectancy; I cannot banish some idea which takes possession of me,

which seems to make my fingers clumsy. I feel that some great event is impending, that my life is about to change; I listen vaguely, I stare into the darkness, I have no liking for my work, and after a thousand fatigues I find life once more—everyday life. Is this a warning from heaven? I ask myself——"

'After three months of this struggle between two diplomates, concealed under the semblance of youthful melancholy, and a woman whose disgust of life made her invulnerable, I told the Count that it was impossible to drag this tortoise out of her shell; it must be broken. The evening before, in our last quite friendly discussion, the Countess had exclaimed—

'"Lucretia's dagger wrote in letters of blood the watchword of woman's charter: *Liberty!*"

'From that moment the Count left me free to act.

'"I have been paid a hundred francs for the flowers and caps I made this week!" Honorine exclaimed gleefully one Saturday evening when I went to visit her in the little sitting-room on the ground floor, which the unavowed proprietor had had regilt.

'It was ten o'clock. The twilight of July and a glorious moon lent us their misty light. Gusts of mingled perfumes soothed the soul; the Countess was clinking in her hand the five gold pieces given to her by a supposititious dealer in fashionable frippery, another of Octave's accomplices found for him by a judge, M. Popinot.

'"I earn my living by amusing myself," said she; "I am free, when men, armed with their laws, have tried to make us slaves. Oh, I have transports of pride every Saturday! In short, I like M. Gaudissart's gold pieces as much as Lord Byron, your double, liked Mr. Murray's."

'"This is not becoming in a woman," said I.

'"Pooh! Am I a woman? I am a boy gifted with a soft soul, that is all; a boy whom no woman can torture——"

'"Your life is the negation of your whole being," I

replied. "What? You, on whom God has lavished His choicest treasures of love and beauty, do you never wish——?"

'"For what?" said she, somewhat disturbed by a speech which, for the first time, gave the lie to the part I had assumed.

'"For a pretty little child with curling hair, running, playing among the flowers, like a flower itself of life and love, and calling you mother!"

'I waited for an answer. A too prolonged silence led me to perceive the terrible effect of my words, though the darkness at first concealed it. Leaning on her sofa, the Countess had not indeed fainted, but frozen under a nervous attack of which the first chill, as gentle as everything that was part of her, felt, as she afterwards said, like the influence of a most insidious poison. I called Madame Gobain, who came and led away her mistress, laid her on her bed, unlaced her, undressed her, and restored her, not to life, it is true, but to the consciousness of some dreadful suffering. I meanwhile walked up and down the path behind the house, weeping, and doubting my success. I only wished to give up this part of the bird-catcher which I had so rashly assumed. Madame Gobain, who came down and found me with my face wet with tears, hastily went up again to say to the Countess—

'"What has happened, madame? Monsieur Maurice is crying like a child."

'Roused to action by the evil interpretation that might be put on our mutual behaviour, she summoned superhuman strength to put on a wrapper and come down to me.

'"You are not the cause of this attack," said she. "I am subject to these spasms, a sort of cramp of the heart——"

'"And you will not tell me of your troubles?" said I, in a voice which cannot be affected, as I wiped away my tears. "Have you not just now told me that you

have been a mother, and have been so unhappy as to lose your child ? "

'"Marie!" she called as she rang the bell. Gobain came in.

'"Bring lights and some tea," said she, with the calm decision of a Mylady clothed in the armour of pride by the dreadful English training which you know too well.

'When the housekeeper had lighted the tapers and closed the shutters, the Countess showed me a mute countenance; her indomitable pride and gravity, worthy of a savage, had already reasserted their mastery. She said—

'"Do you know why I like Lord Byron so much? It is because he suffered as animals do. Of what use are complaints when they are not an elegy like Manfred's, nor bitter mockery like Don Juan's, nor a reverie like Childe Harold's? Nothing shall be known of me. My heart is a poem that I lay before God."

'"If I chose——" said I.

'"If?" she repeated.

'"I have no interest in anything," I replied, "so I cannot be inquisitive; but, if I chose, I could know all your secrets by to-morrow."

'"I defy you!" she exclaimed, with ill-disguised uneasiness.

'"Seriously?"

'"Certainly," said she, tossing her head. "If such a crime is possible, I ought to know it."

'"In the first place, madame," I went on, pointing to her hands, "those pretty fingers, which are enough to show that you are not a mere girl—were they made for toil? Then you call yourself Madame Gobain, you, who, in my presence the other day on receiving a letter, said to Marie: 'Here, this is for you?' Marie is the real Madame Gobain; so you conceal your name behind that of your housekeeper.—Fear nothing, madame, from me. You have in me the most devoted friend you will ever

have: Friend, do you understand me? I give this word its sacred and pathetic meaning, so profaned in France, where we apply it to our enemies. And your friend, who will defend you against everything, only wishes that you should be as happy as such a woman ought to be. Who can tell whether the pain I have involuntarily caused you was not a voluntary act?"

'"Yes," replied she with threatening audacity, "I insist on it. Be curious, and tell me all that you can find out about me; but," and she held up her finger, "you must also tell me by what means you obtain your information. The preservation of the small happiness I enjoy here depends on the steps you take."

'"That means that you will fly——"

'"On wings!" she cried, "to the New World——"

'"Where you will be at the mercy of the brutal passions you will inspire," said I, interrupting her. "Is it not the very essence of genius and beauty to shine, to attract men's gaze, to excite desires and evil thoughts? Paris is a desert with Bedouins; Paris is the only place in the world where those who must work for their livelihood can hide their life. What have you to complain of? Who am I? An additional servant—M. Gobain, that is all. If you have to fight a duel, you may need a second."

'"Never mind; find out who I am. I have already said that I insist. Now, I beg that you will," she went on, with the grace which you ladies have at command,' said the Consul, looking at the ladies.

'"Well, then, to-morrow, at the same hour, I will tell you what I may have discovered," replied I. "But do not therefore hate me! Will you behave like other women?"

'"What do other women do?"

'"They lay upon us immense sacrifices, and when we have made them, they reproach us for it some time later as if it were an injury."

'"They are right if the thing required appears to be a sacrifice!" replied she pointedly.

'"Instead of sacrifices, say efforts and——"

'"It would be an impertinence," said she.

'"Forgive me," said I. "I forgot that woman and the Pope are infallible."

'"Good heavens!" said she after a long pause, "only two words would be enough to destroy the peace so dearly bought, and which I enjoy like a fraud——"

'She rose and paid no further heed to me.

'"Where can I go?" she said. "What is to become of me?—Must I leave this quiet retreat that I had arranged with such care to end my days in?"

'"To end your days!" exclaimed I with visible alarm. "Has it never struck you that a time would come when you could no longer work, when competition will lower the price of flowers and articles of fashion——?"

'"I have already saved a thousand crowns," she said.

'"Heavens! what privations such a sum must represent!" I exclaimed.

'"Leave me," said she, "till to-morrow. This evening I am not myself; I must be alone. Must I not save my strength in case of disaster? For, if you should learn anything, others besides you would be informed, and then— Good-night," she added shortly, dismissing me with an imperious gesture.

'"The battle is to-morrow, then," I replied with a smile, to keep up the appearance of indifference I had given to the scene. But as I went down the avenue I repeated the words—

'"The battle is to-morrow."

'Octave's anxiety was equal to Honorine's. The Count and I remained together till two in the morning, walking to and fro by the trenches of the Bastille, like two generals who, on the eve of a battle, calculate all the chances, examine the ground, and perceive that the

victory must depend on an opportunity to be seized half-way through the fight. These two divided beings would each lie awake, one in the hope, the other in agonising dread of reunion. The real dramas of life are not in circumstances, but in feelings; they are played in the heart, or, if you please, in that vast realm which we ought to call the Spiritual World. Octave and Honorine moved and lived altogether in the world of lofty spirits.

'I was punctual. At ten next evening I was, for the first time, shown into a charming bedroom furnished with white and blue—the nest of this wounded dove. The Countess looked at me, and was about to speak, but was stricken dumb by my respectful demeanour.

'"Madame la Comtesse," said I with a grave smile.

'The poor woman, who had risen, dropped back into her chair and remained there, sunk in an attitude of grief, which I should have liked to see perpetuated by a great painter.

'"You are," I went on, "the wife of the noblest and most highly respected of men; of a man who is acknowledged to be great, but who is far greater in his conduct to you than he is in the eyes of the world. You and he are two lofty natures.—Where do you suppose yourself to be living?" I asked her.

'"In my own house," she replied, opening her eyes with a wide stare of astonishment.

'"In Count Octave's," I replied. "You have been tricked. M. Lenormand, the usher of the Court, is not the real owner; he is only a screen for your husband. The delightful seclusion you enjoy is the Count's work, the money you earn is paid by him, and his protection extends to the most trivial details of your existence. Your husband has saved you in the eyes of the world; he has assigned plausible reasons for your disappearance; he professes to hope that you were not lost in the wreck of the *Cécile*, the ship in which you sailed for Havannah to secure the fortune to be left to you by an old aunt, who

might have forgotten you; you embarked, escorted by two ladies of her family and an old man-servant. The Count says that he has sent agents to various spots, and received letters which give him great hopes. He takes as many precautions to hide you from all eyes as you take yourself. In short, he obeys you . . ."

'"That is enough," she said. "I want to know but one thing more. From whom have you obtained all these details?"

'"Well, madame, my uncle got a place for a penniless youth as secretary to the Commissary of police in this part of Paris. That young man told me everything. If you leave this house this evening, however stealthily, your husband will know where you are gone, and his care will follow you everywhere.—How could a woman so clever as you are believe that shopkeepers buy flowers and caps as dear as they sell them? Ask a thousand crowns for a bouquet, and you will get it. No mother's tenderness was ever more ingenious than your husband's! I have learned from the porter of this house that the Count often comes behind the fence when all are asleep, to see the glimmer of your night-light! Your large cashmere shawl cost six thousand francs—your old-clothes-seller brings you, as second hand, things fresh from the best makers. In short, you are living here like Venus in the toils of Vulcan; but you are alone in your prison by the devices of a sublime magnanimity, sublime for seven years past, and at every hour."

'The Countess was trembling as a trapped swallow trembles while, as you hold it in your hand, it strains its neck to look about it with wild eyes. She shook with a nervous spasm, studying me with a defiant look. Her dry eyes glittered with a light that was almost hot: still, she was a woman! The moment came when her tears forced their way, and she wept—not because she was touched, but because she was helpless; they were tears of desperation. She had believed herself independent

and free ; marriage weighed on her as the prison cell does on the captive.

'"I will go!" she cried through her tears. "He forces me to it ; I will go where no one certainly will come after me."

'"What," I said, "you would kill yourself?—Madame, you must have some very powerful reasons for not wishing to return to Comte Octave."

'"Certainly I have!"

'"Well, then, tell them to me ; tell them to my uncle. In us you will find two devoted advisers. Though in the confessional my uncle is a priest, he never is one in a drawing-room. We will hear you ; we will try to find a solution of the problems you may lay before us ; and if you are the dupe or the victim of some misapprehension, perhaps we can clear the matter up. Your soul, I believe, is pure ; but if you have done wrong, your fault is fully expiated. . . . At any rate, remember that in me you have a most sincere friend. If you should wish to evade the Count's tyranny, I will find you the means ; he shall never find you."

'"Oh! there is always a convent!" said she.

'"Yes. But the Count, as Minister of State, can procure your rejection by every convent in the world. Even though he is powerful, I will save you from him— ; but—only when you have demonstrated to me that you cannot and ought not to return to him. Oh! do not fear that you would escape his power only to fall into mine," I added, noticing a glance of horrible suspicion, full of exaggerated dignity. "You shall have peace, solitude, and independence ; in short, you shall be as free and as little annoyed as if you were an ugly, cross old maid. I myself would never be able to see you without your consent."

'"And how? By what means?"

'"That is my secret. I am not deceiving you, of that you may be sure. Prove to me that this is the only life you can lead, that it is preferable to that of the

Comtesse Octave, rich, admired, in one of the finest houses in Paris, beloved by her husband, a happy mother . . . and I will decide in your favour."

'"But," said she, "will there never be a man who understands me?"

'"No. And that is why I appeal to religion to decide between us. The Curé of the White Friars is a saint, seventy-five years of age. My uncle is not a Grand Inquisitor, he is Saint John; but for you he will be Fénelon—the Fénelon who said to the Duc de Bourgogne: "Eat a calf on a Friday by all means, Monseigneur. But be a Christian."

'"Nay, nay, monsieur, the convent is my last hope and my only refuge. There is none but God who can understand me. No man, not Saint Augustine himself, the tenderest of the Fathers of the Church, could enter into the scruples of my conscience, which are to me as the circles of Dante's hell, whence there is no escape. Another than my husband, a different man, however unworthy of the offering, has had all my love. No, he has not had it, for he did not take it; I gave it him as a mother gives her child a wonderful toy, which it breaks. For me there never could be two loves. In some natures love can never be on trial; it is, or it is not. When it comes, when it rises up, it is complete.—Well, that life of eighteen months was to me a life of eighteen years; I threw into it all the faculties of my being, which were not impoverished by their effusiveness; they were exhausted by that delusive intimacy in which I alone was genuine. For me the cup of happiness is not drained, nor empty; and nothing can refill it, for it is broken. I am out of the fray; I have no weapons left. Having thus utterly abandoned myself, what am I?—the leavings of a feast. I had but one name bestowed on me, Honorine, as I had but one heart. My husband had the young girl, a worthless lover had the woman—there is nothing left!—Then let myself be loved! that is the great idea you mean to

utter to me. Oh! but I still am something, and I rebel at the idea of being a prostitute! Yes, by the light of the conflagration I saw clearly; and I tell you—well, I could imagine surrendering to another's man's love, but to Octave's?—No, never."

'"Ah! you love him," I said.

'"I esteem him, respect him, venerate him; he never has done me the smallest hurt; he is kind, he is tender; but I can never more love him. However," she went on, "let us talk no more of this. Discussion makes everything small. I will express my notions on this subject in writing to you, for at this moment they are suffocating me; I am feverish, my feet are standing in the ashes of my Paraclete. All that I see, these things which I believed I had earned by my labour, now remind me of everything I wish to forget. Ah! I must fly from hence as I fled from my home."

'"Where will you go?" I asked. "Can a woman exist unprotected? At thirty, in all the glory of your beauty, rich in powers of which you have no suspicion, full of tenderness to be bestowed, are you prepared to live in the wilderness where I could hide you?—Be quite easy. The Count, who for nine years has never allowed himself to be seen here, will never go there without your permission. You have his sublime devotion of nine years as a guarantee for your tranquillity. You may therefore discuss the future in perfect confidence with my uncle and me. My uncle has as much influence as a Minister of State. So compose yourself; do not exaggerate your misfortune. A priest whose hair has grown white in the exercise of his functions is not a boy; you will be understood by him to whom every passion has been confided for nearly fifty years now, and who weighs in his hands the ponderous heart of kings and princes. If he is stern under his stole, in the presence of your flowers he will be as tender as they are, and as indulgent as his Divine Master."

'I left the Countess at midnight; she was apparently calm, but depressed, and had some secret purpose which no perspicacity could guess. I found the Count a few paces off, in the Rue Saint-Maur. Drawn by an irresistible attraction, he had quitted the spot on the Boulevards where we had agreed to meet.

'"What a night my poor child will go through!" he exclaimed, when I had finished my account of the scene that had just taken place. "Supposing I were to go to her!" he added; "supposing she were to see me suddenly?"

'"At this moment she is capable of throwing herself out of the window," I replied. "The Countess is one of those Lucretias who could not survive any violence, even if it were done by a man into whose arms she could throw herself."

'"You are young," he answered; "you do not know that in a soul tossed by such dreadful alternatives the will is like waters of a lake lashed by a tempest; the wind changes every instant, and the waves are driven now to one shore, now to the other. During this night the chances are quite as great that on seeing me Honorine might rush into my arms as that she should throw herself out of the window."

'"And you would accept the equal chances," said I.

'"Well, come," said he, "I have at home, to enable me to wait till to-morrow, a dose of opium which Desplein prepared for me to send me to sleep without any risk!"

'Next day at noon Gobain brought me a letter, telling me that the Countess had gone to bed at six, worn out with fatigue, and that, having taken a soothing draught prepared by the chemist, she had now fallen asleep.

'This is her letter, of which I kept a copy—for you, mademoiselle,' said the Consul, addressing Camille, 'know all the resources of art, the tricks of style, and the efforts made in their compositions by writers who do

not lack skill; but you will acknowledge that literature could never find such language in its assumed pathos; there is nothing so terrible as truth. Here is the letter written by this woman, or rather by this anguish :—

'"Monsieur Maurice,—

'"I know all your uncle could say to me; he is not better informed than my own conscience. Conscience is the interpreter of God to man. I know that if I am not reconciled to Octave, I shall be damned; that is the sentence of religious law. Civil law condemns me to obey, cost what it may. If my husband does not reject me, the world will regard me as pure, as virtuous, whatever I may have done. Yes, that much is sublime in marriage: society ratifies the husband's forgiveness; but it forgets that the forgiveness must be accepted. Legally, religiously, and from the world's point of view I ought to go back to Octave. Keeping only to the human aspect of the question, is it not cruel to refuse him happiness, to deprive him of children, to wipe his name out of the Golden Book and the list of peers? My sufferings, my repugnance, my feelings, all my egoism—for I know that I am an egoist—ought to be sacrificed to the family. I shall be a mother; the caresses of my child will wipe away many tears! I shall be very happy; I certainly shall be much looked up to. I shall ride, haughty and wealthy, in a handsome carriage! I shall have servants and a fine house, and be the queen of as many parties as there are weeks in the year. The world will receive me handsomely. I shall not have to climb up again to the heaven of aristocracy, I shall never have come down from it. So God, the law, society are all in accord.

'"'What are you rebelling against?' I am asked from the height of heaven, from the pulpit, from the judge's bench, and from the throne, whose august intervention may at need be invoked by the Count. Your uncle, indeed,

at need, would speak to me of a certain celestial grace which will flood my heart when I know the pleasure of doing my duty.

'"God, the law, the world, and Octave all wish me to live, no doubt. Well, if there is no other difficulty, my reply cuts the knot: I will not live. I will become quite white and inoocent again; for I will lie in my shroud, white with the blameless pallor of death. This is not in the least 'mulish obstinacy.' That mulish obstinacy of which you jestingly accused me is in a woman the result of confidence, of a vision of the future. Though my husband, sublimely generous, may forget all, I shall not forget. Does forgetfulness depend on our will? When a widow re-marries, love makes a girl of her; she marries a man she loves. But I cannot love the Count. It all lies in that, do not you see?

'"Every time my eyes met his I should see my sin in them, even when his were full of love. The greatness of his generosity would be the measure of the greatness of my crime. My eyes, always uneasy, would be for ever reading an invisible condemnation. My heart would be full of confused and struggling memories; marriage can never move me to the cruel rapture, the mortal delirium of passion. I should kill my husband by my coldness, by comparisons which he would guess, though hidden in the depths of my conscience. Oh! on the day when I should read a trace of involuntary, even of suppressed reproach in a furrow on his brow, in a saddened look, in some imperceptible gesture, nothing could hold me: I should be lying with a fractured skull on the pavement, and find that less hard than my husband. It might be my own over-susceptibility that would lead me to this horrible but welcome death; I might die the victim of an impatient mood in Octave caused by some matter of business, or be deceived by some unjust suspicion. Alas! I might even mistake some proof of love for a sign of contempt!

'"What torture on both sides! Octave would be always doubting me, I doubting him. I, quite involuntarily, should give him a rival wholly unworthy of him, a man whom I despise, but with whom I have known raptures branded on me with fire, which are my shame, but which I cannot forget.

'" Have I shown you enough of my heart? No one, monsieur, can convince me that love may be renewed, for I neither can nor will accept love from any one. A young bride is like a plucked flower; but a guilty wife is like a flower that had been walked over. You, who are a florist, you know whether it is ever possible to restore the broken stem, to revive the faded colours, to make the sap flow again in the tender vessels of which the whole vegetative function lies in their perfect rigidity. If some botanist should attempt the operation, could his genius smooth out the folds of the bruised corolla? If he could remake a flower, he would be God! God alone can remake me! I am drinking the bitter cup of expiation; but as I drink it I painfully spell out this sentence: Expiation is not annihilation.

'" In my little house, alone, I eat my bread soaked in tears; but no one sees me eat nor sees me weep. If I go back to Octave, I must give up my tears—they would offend him. Oh! Monsieur, how many virtues must a woman tread under foot, not to give herself, but to restore herself to a betrayed husband? Who could count them? God alone; for He alone can know and encourage the horrible refinements at which the angels must turn pale. Nay, I will go further. A woman has courage in the presence of her husband if he knows nothing; she shows a sort of fierce strength in her hypocrisy; she deceives him to secure him double happiness. But common knowledge is surely degrading. Supposing I could exchange humiliation for ecstasy? Would not Octave at last feel that my consent was sheer depravity? Marriage is based on esteem, on sacrifices on both sides; but neither Octave

nor I could esteem each other the day after our reunion. He would have disgraced me by a love like that of an old man for a courtesan, and I should for ever feel the shame of being a chattel instead of a lady. I should represent pleasure, and not virtue, in his house. These are the bitter fruits of such a sin. I have made myself a bed where I can only toss on burning coals, a sleepless pillow.

'" Here, when I suffer, I bless my sufferings ; I say to God, ' I thank Thee ! ' But in my husband's house I should be full of terror, tasting joys to which I have no right.

'" All this, Monsieur, is not argument ; it is the feeling of a soul made vast and hollow by seven years of suffering. Finally, must I make a horrible confession ? I shall always feel at my bosom the lips of a child conceived in rapture and joy, and in the belief in happiness, of a child I nursed for seven months, that I shall bear in my womb all the days of my life. If other children should draw their nourishment from me, they would drink in tears mingling with the milk, and turning it sour. I seem a light thing, you regard me as a child—Ah yes ! I have a child's memory, the memory which returns to us on the verge of the tomb. So, you see, there is not a situation in that beautiful life to which the world and my husband's love want to recall me, which is not a false position, which does not cover a snare or reveal a precipice down which I must fall, torn by pitiless rocks. For five years now I have been wandering in the sandy desert of the future without finding a place convenient to repent in, because my soul is possessed by true repentance.

'" Religion has its answers ready to all this, and I know them by heart. This suffering, these difficulties, are my punishment she says, and God will give me strength to endure them. This, monsieur, is an argument to certain pious souls gifted with an energy which I have not. I have made my choice between this hell,

where God does not forbid my blessing Him, and the hell that awaits me under Count Octave's roof.

'"One word more. If I were still a girl, with the experience I now have, my husband is the man I should choose; but that is the very reason of my refusal. I could not bear to blush before that man. What! I should be always on my knees, he always standing upright; and if we were to exchange positions, I should scorn him! I will not be better treated by him in consequence of my sin. The angel who might venture under such circumstances on certain liberties which are permissible when both are equally blameless, is not on earth; he dwells in heaven! Octave is full of delicate feeling, I know; but even in his soul (which, however generous, is a man's soul after all) there is no guarantee for the new life I should lead with him.

'"Come, then, and tell me where I may find the solitude, the peace, the silence, so kindly to irreparable woes, which you promised me."

'After making this copy of the letter to preserve it complete, I went to the Rue Payenne. Anxiety had conquered the power of opium. Octave was walking up and down his garden like a madman.

'"Answer that!" said I, giving him his wife's letter. "Try to reassure the modesty of experience. It is rather more difficult than conquering the modesty of ignorance, which curiosity helps to betray."

'"She is mine!" cried the Count, whose face expressed joy as he went on reading the letter.

'He signed to me with his hand to leave him to himself. I understood that extreme happiness and extreme pain obey the same laws: I went in to receive Madame de Courteville and Amélie, who were to dine with the Count that day. However handsome Mademoiselle de Courteville might be, I felt, on seeing her once more, that love has three aspects, and that the

women who can inspire us with perfect love are very rare. As I involuntarily compared Amélie with Honorine, I found the erring wife more attractive than the pure girl. To Honorine's heart fidelity had not been a duty, but the inevitable; while Amélie would serenely pronounce the most solemn promises without knowing their purport or to what they bound her. The crushed, the dead woman, so to speak, the sinner to be reinstated, seemed to me sublime; she incited the special generosities of a man's nature; she demanded all the treasures of the heart, all the resources of strength; she filled his life and gave the zest of a conflict to happiness; whereas Amélie, chaste and confiding, would settle down into the sphere of peaceful motherhood, where the commonplace must be its poetry, and where my mind would find no struggle and no victory.

'Of the plains of Champagne and the snowy, storm-beaten but sublime Alps, what young man would choose the chalky, monotonous level? No; such comparisons are fatal and wrong on the threshold of the Mairie. Alas! only the experience of life can teach us that marriage excludes passion, that a family cannot have its foundation on the tempests of love. After having dreamed of impossible love, with its infinite caprices, after having tasted the tormenting delights of the ideal, I saw before me modest reality. Pity me, for what could be expected! At five-and-twenty I did not trust myself; but I took a manful resolution.

'I went back to the Count to announce the arrival of his relations, and I saw him grown young again in the reflected light of hope.

'"What ails you, Maurice?" said he, struck by my changed expression.

'"Monsieur le Comte——"

'"No longer Octave? You, to whom I shall owe my life, my happiness——'

'"My dear Octave, if you should succeed in bringing

the Countess back to her duty, I have studied her well" —(he looked at me as Othello must have looked at Iago when Iago first contrived to insinuate a suspicion into the Moor's mind)—" she must never see me again; she must never know that Maurice was your secretary. Never mention my name to her, or all will be undone. . . . You have got me an appointment as Maître des Requêtes—well, get me instead some diplomatic post abroad, a consulship, and do not think of my marrying Amélie.—Oh! do not be uneasy," I added, seeing him draw himself up, "I will play my part to the end."

'"Poor boy!" said he, taking my hand, which he pressed, while he kept back the tears that were starting to his eyes.

'"You gave me gloves," I said, laughing, "but I have not put them on; that is all."

'We then agreed as to what I was to do that evening at Honorine's house, whither I presently returned. It was now August; the day had been hot and stormy, but the storm hung overhead, the sky was like copper; the scent of the flowers was heavy, I felt as if I were in an oven, and caught myself wishing that the Countess might have set out for the Indies; but she was sitting on a wooden bench shaped like a sofa, under an arbour, in a loose dress of white muslin fastened with blue bows, her hair unadorned in waving bands over her cheeks, her feet on a small wooden stool, and showing a little way beyond her skirt. She did not rise; she showed me with her hand to the seat by her side, saying—

'"Now, is not life at a deadlock for me?"

'"Life as you have made it," I replied. "But not the life I propose to make for you; for, if you choose, you may be very happy. . . ."

'"How?" said she; her whole person was a question.

'"Your letter is in the Count's hands."

'Honorine started like a frightened doe, sprang to a few paces off, walked down the garden, turned about, remained standing for some minutes, and finally went in to sit alone in the drawing-room, where I joined her, after giving her time to get accustomed to the pain of this poniard thrust.

'"You—a friend? Say rather a traitor! A spy, perhaps, sent by my husband."

'Instinct in women is as strong as the perspicacity of great men.

'"You wanted an answer to your letter, did not you? And there was but one man in the world who could write it. You must read the reply, my dear Countess; and if after reading it you still find that your life is a deadlock, the spy will prove himself a friend; I will place you in a convent whence the Count's power cannot drag you. But, before going there, let us consider the other side of the question. There is a law, alike divine and human, which even hatred affects to obey, and which commands us not to condemn the accused without hearing his defence. Till now you have passed condemnation, as children do, with your ears stopped. The devotion of seven years has its claims. So you must read the answer your husband will send you. I have forwarded to him, through my uncle, a copy of your letter, and my uncle asked him what his reply would be if his wife wrote him a letter in such terms. Thus you are not compromised. He will himself bring the Count's answer. In the presence of that saintly man, and in mine, out of respect for your own dignity, you must read it, or you will be no better than a wilful, passionate child. You must make this sacrifice to the world, to the law, and to God."

'As she saw in this concession no attack on her womanly resolve, she consented. All the labour of four or five months had been building up to this moment. But do not the Pyramids end in a point on which a bird

may perch? The Count had set all his hopes on this supreme instant, and he had reached it.

'In all my life I remember nothing more formidable than my uncle's entrance into that little Pompadour drawing-room, at ten that evening. The fine head, with its silver hair thrown into relief by the entirely black dress, and the divinely calm face, had a magical effect on the Comtesse Honorine; she had the feeling of cool balm on her wounds, and beamed in the reflection of that virtue which gave light without knowing it.

'"Monsieur the Curé of the White Friars," said old Gobain.

'"Are you come, uncle, with a message of happiness and peace?" said I.

'"Happiness and peace are always to be found in obedience to the precepts of the Church," replied my uncle, and he handed the Countess the following letter:—

'"My dear Honorine,—

'"If you had but done me the favour of trusting me, if you had read the letter I wrote to you five years since, you would have spared yourself five years of useless labour, and of privations which have grieved me deeply. In it I proposed an arrangement of which the stipulations will relieve all your fears, and make our domestic life possible. I have much to reproach myself with, and in seven years of sorrow I have discovered all my errors. I misunderstood marriage. I failed to scent danger when it threatened you. An angel was in my house. The Lord bid me guard it well! The Lord has punished me for my audacious confidence.

'"You cannot give yourself a single lash without striking me. Have mercy on me, my dear Honorine. I so fully appreciated your susceptibilities that I would not bring you back to the old house in the Rue Payenne, where I can live without you, but which I could not bear to see again with you. I am decorating, with great

pleasure, another house, in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, to which, in hope, I conduct not a wife whom I owe to her ignorance of life, and secured to me by law, but a sister who will allow me to press on her brow such a kiss as a father gives the daughter he blesses every day.

'"Will you bereave me of the right I have conquered from your despair—that of watching more closely over your needs, your pleasures, your life even? Women have one heart always on their side, always abounding in excuses—their mother's; you never knew any mother but my mother, who would have brought you back to me. But how is it that you never guessed that I had for you the heart of a mother, both of my mother and of your own? Yes, dear, my affection is neither mean nor grasping; it is one of those which will never let any annoyance last long enough to pucker the brow of the child it worships. What can you think of the companion of your childhood, Honorine, if you believe him capable of accepting kisses given in trembling, of living between delight and anxiety? Do not fear that you will be exposed to the laments of a suppliant passion; I would not want you back until I felt certain of my own strength to leave you in perfect freedom.

'"Your solitary pride has exaggerated the difficulties. You may, if you will, look on at the life of a brother, or of a father, without either suffering or joy; but you will find neither mockery nor indifference, nor have any doubt as to his intentions. The warmth of the atmosphere in which you live will be always equable and genial, without tempests, without a possible squall. If, later, when you feel secure that you are as much at home as in your own little house, you desire to try some other elements of happiness, pleasures, or amusements, you can expand their circle at your will. The tenderness of a mother knows neither contempt nor pity. What is it? Love without desire. Well, in me admiration shall hide every sentiment in which you might see an offence.

'"Thus, living side by side, we may both be magnanimous. In you the kindness of a sister, the affectionate thoughtfulness of a friend, will satisfy the ambition of him who wishes to be your life's companion; and you may measure his tenderness by the care he will take to conceal it. Neither you nor I will be jealous of the past, for we may each acknowledge that the other has sense enough to look only straight forward.

'"Thus you will be at home in your new house exactly as you are in the Rue Saint-Maur; unapproachable, alone, occupied as you please, living by your own law; but having in addition the legitimate protection, of which you are now exacting the most chivalrous labours of love, with the consideration which lends so much lustre to a woman, and the fortune which will allow of your doing many good works. Honorine, when you long for an unnecessary absolution, you have only to ask for it; it will not be forced upon you by the Church or by the Law; it will wait on your pride, on your own impulsion. My wife might indeed have to fear all the things you dread; but not my friend and sister, towards whom I am bound to show every form and refinement of politeness. To see you happy is enough happiness for me; I have proved this for these seven years past. The guarantee for this, Honorine, is to be seen in all the flowers made by you, carefully preserved, and watered by my tears. Like the *quipos*, the tally cords of the Peruvians, they are the record of our sorrows.

'"If this secret compact does not suit you, my child, I have begged the saintly man who takes charge of this letter not to say a word in my behalf. I will not owe your return to the terrors threatened by the Church, nor to the bidding of the Law. I will not accept the simple and quiet happiness that I ask from any one but yourself. If you persist in condemning me to the lonely life, bereft even of a fraternal smile, which I have led for nine years, if you remain in your solitude and show no sign,

my will yields to yours. Understand me perfectly: you shall be no more troubled than you have been until this day. I will get rid of the crazy fellow who has meddled in your concerns, and has perhaps caused you some annoyance . . ."

'"Monsieur," said Honorine, folding up the letter, which she placed in her bosom, and looking at my uncle, "thank you very much. I will avail myself of Monsieur le Comte's permission to remain here——"

'"Ah!" I exclaimed.

'This exclamation made my uncle look at me uneasily, and won from the Countess a mischievous glance, which enlightened me as to her motives.

'Honorine had wanted to ascertain whether I were an actor, a bird snarer; and I had the melancholy satisfaction of deceiving her by my exclamation, which was one of those cries from the heart which women understand so well.

'"Ah, Maurice," said she, "you know how to love."

'The light that flashed in my eyes was another reply which would have dissipated the Countess's uneasiness if she still had any. Thus the Count found me useful to the very last.

'Honorine then took out the Count's letter again to finish reading it. My uncle signed to me, and I rose.

'"Let us leave the Countess," said he.

'"You are going already, Maurice?" she said, without looking at me.

'She rose, and still reading, followed us to the door. On the threshold she took my hand, pressed it very affectionately, and said, "We shall meet again . . ."

'"No," I replied, wringing her hand, so that she cried out. "You love your husband. I leave to-morrow."

'And I rushed away, leaving my uncle, to whom she said—

'"Why, what is the matter with your nephew?"

'The good Abbé completed my work by pointing to his head and heart, as much as to say, "He is mad, madame; you must forgive him!" and with all the more truth, because he really thought it.

'Six days after, I set out with an appointment as vice-consul in Spain, in a large commercial town, where I could quickly qualify to rise in the career of a consul, to which I now restricted my ambition. After I had established myself there, I received this letter from the Count:—

'"My dear Maurice,—

'"If I were happy, I should not write to you, but I have entered on a new life of suffering. I have grown young again in my desires, with all the impatience of a man of forty, and the prudence of a diplomatist, who has learned to moderate his passion. When you left I had not yet been admitted to the *pavillon* in the Rue Saint-Maur, but a letter had promised me that I should have permission—the mild and melancholy letter of a woman who dreaded the agitations of a meeting. After waiting for more than a month, I made bold to call, and desired Gobain to inquire whether I could be received. I sat down in a chair in the avenue near the lodge, my head buried in my hands, and there I remained for almost an hour.

'"'Madame had to dress,' said Gobain, to hide Honorine's hesitancy under a pride of appearance which was flattering to me.

'"During a long quarter of an hour we both of us were possessed by an involuntary nervous trembling as great as that which seizes a speaker on the platform, and we spoke to each other in scared phrases, like those of persons taken by surprise who 'make believe' a conversation.

'"'You see, Honorine,' said I, my eyes full of tears, 'the ice is broken, and I am so tremulous with happiness

that you must forgive the incoherency of my language. It will be so for a long time yet.'

'"'There is no crime in being in love with your wife,' said she with a forced smile.

'"'Do me the favour,' said I, 'no longer to work as you do. I have heard from Madame Gobain that for three weeks you have been living on your savings; you have sixty thousand francs a year of your own, and if you cannot give me back your heart, at least do not abandon your fortune to me.'

'"'I have long known your kindness,' said she.

'"'Though you should prefer to remain here,' said I, 'and to preserve your independence; though the most ardent love should find no favour in your eyes, still, do not toil.'

'"I gave her three certificates for twelve thousand francs a year each; she took them, opened them languidly, and after reading them through she gave me only a look as my reward. She fully understood that I was not offering her money, but freedom.

'"'I am conquered,' said she, holding out her hand, which I kissed. 'Come and see me as often as you like.'

'"So she had done herself a violence in receiving me. Next day I found her armed with affected high spirits, and it took two months of habit before I saw her in her true character. But then it was like a delicious May, a springtime of love that gave me ineffable bliss; she was no longer afraid; she was studying me. Alas! when I proposed that she should go to England to return ostensibly to me, to our home, that she should resume her rank and live in our new residence, she was seized with alarm.

'"'Why not live always as we are?' she said.

'"I submitted without saying a word.

'"'Is she making an experiment?' I asked myself as I left her. On my way from my own house to the Rue Saint-Maur thoughts of love had swelled in my heart, and

I had said to myself, like a young man, 'This evening she will yield.'

'"All my real or affected force was blown to the winds by a smile, by a command from those proud, calm eyes, untouched by passion. I remembered the terrible words you once quoted to me, 'Lucretia's dagger wrote in letters of blood the watchword of woman's charter—Liberty!' and they froze me. I felt imperatively how necessary to me was Honorine's consent, and how impossible it was to wring it from her. Could she guess the storms that distracted me when I left as when I came?

'"At last I painted my situation in a letter to her, giving up the attempt to speak of it. Honorine made no answer, and she was so sad that I made as though I had not written. I was deeply grieved by the idea that I could have distressed her; she read my heart and forgave me. And this was how. Three days ago she received me, for the first time, in her own blue-and-white room. It was bright with flowers, dressed, and lighted up. Honorine was in a dress that made her bewitching. Her hair framed that face that you know in its light curls; and in it were some sprays of Cape heath; she wore a white muslin gown, a white sash with long floating ends. You know what she is in such simplicity, but that day she was a bride, the Honorine of long past days. My joy was chilled at once, for her face was terribly grave; there were fires beneath the ice.

'"'Octave,' she said, 'I will return as your wife when you will. But understand clearly that this submission has its dangers. I can be resigned——'

'"I made a movement.

'"'Yes,' she went on, 'I understand: resignation offends you, and you want what I cannot give—Love. Religion and pity led me to renounce my vow of solitude; you are here!' She paused.

'"'At first,' she went on, 'you asked no more. Now

you demand your wife. Well, here I give you Honorine, such as she is, without deceiving you as to what she will be.—What shall I be? A mother? I hope it. Believe me, I hope it eagerly. Try to change me; you have my consent; but if I should die, my dear, do not curse my memory, and do not set down to obstinacy what I should call the worship of the Ideal, if it were not more natural to call the indefinable feeling which must kill me the worship of the Divine! The future will be nothing to me; it will be your concern; consult your own mind.'

'"And she sat down in the calm attitude you used to admire, and watched me turning pale with the pain she had inflicted. My blood ran cold. On seeing the effect of her words she took both my hands, and, holding them in her own, she said—

'"'Octave, I do love you, but not in the way you wish to be loved. I love your soul. . . . Still, understand that I love you enough to die in your service like an Eastern slave, and without a regret. It will be my expiation.'

'"She did more; she knelt before me on a cushion, and in a spirit of sublime charity she said—

'"'And perhaps I shall not die!'

'"For two months now I have been struggling with myself. What shall I do? My heart is too full; I therefore seek a friend, and send out this cry, 'What shall I do?'"

'I did not answer this letter. Two months later the newspapers announced the return on board an English vessel of the Comtesse Octave, restored to her family after adventures by land and sea, invented with sufficient probability to arouse no contradiction.

'When I moved to Genoa I received a formal announcement of the happy event of the birth of a son to the Count and Countess. I held that letter in my hand for two hours, sitting on this terrace—on this

bench. Two months after, urged by Octave, by M. de Grandville, and Monsieur de Sérizy, my kind friends, and broken by the death of my uncle, I agreed to take a wife.

'Six months after the revolution of July I received this letter, which concludes the story of this couple :—

'"Monsieur Maurice,—I am dying though I am a mother—perhaps because I am a mother. I have played my part as a wife well; I have deceived my husband. I have had happiness not less genuine than the tears shed by actresses on the stage. I am dying for society, for the family, for marriage, as the early Christians died for God! I know not of what I am dying, and I am honestly trying to find out, for I am not perverse; but I am bent on explaining my malady to you—you who brought that heavenly physician your uncle, at whose word I surrendered. He was my director; I nursed him in his last illness, and he showed me the way to heaven, bidding me persevere in my duty.

'"And I have done my duty.

'"I do not blame those who forget. I admire them as strong and necessary natures; but I have the malady of memory! I have not been able twice to feel that love of the heart which identifies a woman with the man she loves. To the last moment, as you know, I cried to your heart, in the confessional, and to my husband, 'Have mercy!' But there was no mercy. Well, and I am dying, dying with stupendous courage. No courtesan was ever more gay than I. My poor Octave is happy; I let his love feed on the illusions of my heart. I throw all my powers into this terrible masquerade; the actress is applauded, feasted, smothered in flowers; but the invisible rival comes every day to seek its prey—a fragment of my life. I am rent and I smile. I smile on two children, but it is the elder, the dead one, that will triumph! I told you so before. The dead child calls me, and I am going to him.

'"The intimacy of marriage without love is a position in which my soul feels degraded every hour. I can never weep or give myself up to dreams but when I am alone. The exigencies of society, the care of my child, and that of Octave's happiness never leave me a moment to refresh myself, to renew my strength, as I could in my solitude. The incessant need for watchfulness startles my heart with constant alarms. I have not succeeded in implanting in my soul the sharp-eared vigilance that lies with facility, and has the eyes of a lynx. It is not the lip of one I love that drinks my tears and kisses my eyelids; it is a handkerchief that dries them; my burning eyes are cooled with water, and not with tender lips. It is my soul that acts a part, and that perhaps is why I am dying! I lock up my griefs with so much care that nothing is to be seen of it; it must eat into something, and it has attacked my life.

'"I said to the doctors, who discovered my secret, 'Make me die of some plausible complaint, or I shall drag my husband with me.'

'"So it is quite understood by M. Desplein, Bianchon, and myself that I am dying of the softening of some bone which science has fully described. Octave believes that I adore him, do you understand? So I am afraid lest he should follow me. I now write to beg you in that case to be the little Count's guardian. You will find with this a codicil in which I have expressed my wish; but do not produce it excepting in case of need, for perhaps I am fatuously vain. My devotion may perhaps leave Octave inconsolable but willing to live.—Poor Octave! I wish him a better wife than I am, for he deserves to be well loved.

'"Since my spiritual spy is married, I bid him remember what the florist of the Rue Saint-Maur hereby bequeaths to him as a lesson: May your wife soon be a mother! Fling her into the vulgarest materialism of household life; hinder her from cherishing in her heart

the mysterious flower of the Ideal—of that heavenly perfection in which I believed, that enchanted blossom with glorious colours, and whose perfume disgusts us with reality. I am a Saint-Theresa who has not been suffered to live on ecstasy in the depths of a convent, with the Holy Infant, and a spotless winged angel to come and go as she wished.

'"You saw me happy among my beloved flowers. I did not tell you all: I saw love budding under your affected madness, and I concealed from you my thoughts, my poetry; I did not admit you to my kingdom of beauty. Well, well; you will love my child for love of me if he should one day lose his poor father. Keep my secrets as the grave will keep them. Do not mourn for me; I have been dead this many a day, if Saint Bernard was right in saying that where there is no more love there is no more life."'

'And the Countess died,' said the Consul, putting away the letters and locking the pocket-book.

'Is the Count still living?' asked the Ambassador, 'for since the revolution of July he has disappeared from the political stage.'

'Do you remember, Monsieur de Lora,' said the Consul-General, 'having seen me going to the steam-boat with——'

'A white-haired man! an old man?' said the painter.

'An old man of forty-five, going in search of health and amusement in Southern Italy. That old man was my poor friend, my patron, passing through Genoa to take leave of me and place his will in my hands. He appoints me his son's guardian. I had no occasion to tell him of Honorine's wishes.'

'Does he suspect himself of murder?' said Mademoiselle des Touches to the Baron de L'Hostal.

'He suspects the truth,' replied the Consul, 'and that is what is killing him. I remained on board the steam

packet that was to take him to Naples till it was out of the roadstead; a small boat brought me back. We sat for some little time taking leave of each other—for ever, I fear. God only knows how much we love the confidant of our love when she who inspired it is no more.

'"That man," said Octave, "holds a charm and wears an aureole." The Count went to the prow and looked down on the Mediterranean. It happened to be fine, and, moved no doubt by the spectacle, he spoke these last words: "Ought we not, in the interests of human nature, to inquire what is the irresistible power which leads us to sacrifice an exquisite creature to the most fugitive of all pleasures, and in spite of our reason? In my conscience I heard cries. Honorine was not alone in her anguish. And yet I would have it! . . . I am consumed by remorse. In the Rue Payenne I was dying of the joys I had not; now I shall die in Italy of the joys I have had. . . . Wherein lay the discord between two natures, equally noble, I dare assert?"'

For some minutes profound silence reigned on the terrace.

Then the Consul, turning to the two women, asked, 'Was she virtuous?'

Mademoiselle des Touches rose, took the Consul's arm, went a few steps away, and said to him—

'Are not men wrong too when they come to us and make a young girl a wife while cherishing at the bottom of their heart some angelic image, and comparing us to those unknown rivals, to perfections often borrowed from a remembrance, and always finding us wanting?'

'Mademoiselle, you would be right if marriage were based on passion; and that was the mistake of those two, who will soon be no more. Marriage with heart-deep love on both sides would be Paradise.'

Mademoiselle des Touches turned from the Consul, and was immediately joined by Claude Vignon, who said in her ear—

'A bit of a coxcomb is M. de L'Hostal.'

'No,' replied she, whispering to Claude these words: 'for he has not yet guessed that Honorine would have loved him.—Oh!' she exclaimed, seeing the Consul's wife approaching, 'his wife was listening! Unhappy man!'

Eleven was striking by all the clocks, and the guests went home on foot along the seashore.

'Still, that is not life,' said Mademoiselle des Touches. 'That woman was one of the rarest, and perhaps the most extraordinary exceptions in intellect—a pearl! Life is made up of various incidents, of pain and pleasure alternately. The Paradise of Dante, that sublime expression of the ideal, that perpetual blue, is to be found only in the soul; to ask it of the facts of life is a luxury against which nature protests every hour. To such souls as those the six feet of a cell, and the kneeling chair are all they need.'

'You are right,' said Léon de Lora; 'but good-for-nothing as I may be, I cannot help admiring a woman who is capable, as that one was, of living by the side of a studio, under a painter's roof, and never coming down, nor seeing the world, nor dipping her feet in the street mud.'

'Such a thing has been known—for a few months,' said Claude Vignon, with deep irony.

'Comtesse Honorine is not unique of her kind,' replied the Ambassador to Mademoiselle des Touches. 'A man, nay, and a politician, a bitter writer, was the object of such a passion; and the pistol shot which killed him hit not him alone; the woman who loved lived like a nun ever after.'

'Then there are yet some great souls in this age!' said Camille Maupin, and she stood for some minutes pensively leaning on the balustrade of the quay.

PARIS, *January* 1843.

COLONEL CHABERT

To Madame la Comtesse Ida de Bocarmé née *du Chasteler.*

'Hullo! There is that old Box-coat again!'

This exclamation was made by a lawyer's clerk of the class called in French offices a gutter-jumper—a messenger in fact—who at this moment was eating a piece of dry bread with a hearty appetite. He pulled off a morsel of crumb to make into a bullet, and fired it gleefully through the open pane of the window against which he was leaning. The pellet, well aimed, rebounded almost as high as the window, after hitting the hat of a stranger who was crossing the courtyard of a house in the Rue Vivienne, where dwelt Maître Derville, attorney-at-law.

'Come, Simonnin, don't play tricks on people, or I will turn you out of doors. However poor a client may be, he is still a man, hang it all!' said the head clerk, pausing in the addition of a bill of costs.

The lawyer's messenger is commonly, as was Simonnin, a lad of thirteen or fourteen, who, in every office, is under the special jurisdiction of the managing clerk, whose errands and *billets-doux* keep him employed on his way to carry writs to the bailiffs and petitions to the Courts. He is akin to the street boy in his habits, and to the pettifogger by fate. The boy is almost always ruthless, unbroken, unmanageable, a ribald rhymester, impudent, greedy, and idle. And yet, almost all these clerklings have an old mother lodging on some fifth floor with whom they share their pittance of thirty or forty francs a month.

'If he is a man, why do you call him old Box-coat?' asked Simonnin, with the air of a schoolboy who has caught out his master.

And he went on eating his bread and cheese, leaning his shoulder against the window jamb; for he rested standing like a cab-horse, one of his legs raised and propped against the other, on the toe of his shoe.

'What trick can we play that cove?' said the third clerk, whose name was Godeschal, in a low voice, pausing in the middle of a discourse he was extemporising in an appeal engrossed by the fourth clerk, of which copies were being made by two neophytes from the provinces.

Then he went on improvising—

'*But, in his noble and beneficent wisdom, his Majesty, Louis the Eighteenth*—(write it at full length, heh! Desroches the learned—you, as you engross it!)—*when he resumed the reins of Government, understood*—(what did that old nincompoop ever understand?)—*the high mission to which he had been called by Divine Providence!*—(a note of admiration and six stops. They are pious enough at the Courts to let us put six)—*and his first thought, as is proved by the date of the order hereinafter designated, was to repair the misfortunes caused by the terrible and sad disasters of the revolutionary times, by restoring to his numerous and faithful adherents*—('numerous' is flattering, and ought to please the Bench)—*all their unsold estates, whether within our realm, or in conquered or acquired territory, or in the endowments of public institutions, for we are, and proclaim ourselves competent to declare, that this is the spirit and meaning of the famous, truly loyal order given in*—Stop,' said Godeschal to the three copying clerks, 'that rascally sentence brings me to the end of my page.—Well,' he went on, wetting the back fold of the sheet with his tongue, so as to be able to fold back the page of thick stamped paper, 'well, if you want to play him a trick, tell him that the master can only see his clients between

two and three in the morning; we shall see if he comes, the old ruffian!'

And Godeschal took up the sentence he was dictating —'*given in*—Are you ready?'

'Yes,' cried the three writers.

It all went on together, the appeal, the gossip, and the conspiracy.

'*Given in*—Here, Daddy Boucard, what is the date of the order? We must dot our *i*'s and cross our *t*'s, by Jingo! It helps to fill the pages.'

'By Jingo!' repeated one of the copying clerks before Boucard, the head clerk, could reply.

'What! have you written *by Jingo*?' cried Godeschal, looking at one of the novices, with an expression at once stern and humorous.

'Why, yes,' said Desroches, the fourth clerk, leaning across his neighbour's copy, 'he has written "*We must dot our* i'*s*" and spelt it *by Gingo*!'

All the clerks shouted with laughter.

'Why! Monsieur Huré, you take "By Jingo" for a law term, and you say you come from Mortagne!' exclaimed Simonnin.

'Scratch it cleanly out,' said the head clerk. 'If the judge, whose business it is to tax the bill, were to see such things, he would say you were laughing at the whole boiling. You would hear of it from the chief! Come, no more of this nonsense, Monsieur Huré! A Norman ought not to write out an appeal without thought. It is the "Shoulder arms!" of the law.'

'*Given in—in*?' asked Godeschal.—'Tell me when, Boucard.'

'June 1814,' replied the head clerk, without looking up from his work.

A knock at the office door interrupted the circumlocutions of the prolix document. Five clerks with rows of hungry teeth, bright, mocking eyes, and curly heads,

lifted their noses towards the door, after crying all together in a singing tone, 'Come in!'

Boucard kept his face buried in a pile of papers—*broutilles* (odds and ends) in French law jargon—and went on drawing out the bill of costs on which he was busy.

The office was a large room furnished with the traditional stool which is to be seen in all these dens of law-quibbling. The stove pipe crossed the room diagonally to the chimney of a bricked-up fireplace; on the marble chimney-piece were several chunks of bread, triangles of Brie cheese, pork cutlets, glasses, bottles, and the head clerk's cup of chocolate. The smell of these dainties blended so completely with that of the immoderately overheated stove and the odour peculiar to offices and old papers, that the trail of a fox would not have been perceptible. The floor was covered with mud and snow, brought in by the clerks. Near the window stood the desk with a revolving lid, where the head clerk worked, and against the back of it was the second clerk's table. The second clerk was at this moment in Court. It was between eight and nine in the morning.

The only decoration of the office consisted in huge yellow posters, announcing seizures of real estate, sales, settlements under trust, final or interim judgments,—all the glory of a lawyer's office. Behind the head clerk was an enormous stack of pigeon-holes from the top to the bottom of the room, of which each division was crammed with bundles of papers with an infinite number of tickets hanging from them at the ends of red tape, which give a peculiar physiognomy to law-papers. The lower rows were filled with cardboard boxes, yellow with use, on which might be read the names of the more important clients whose cases were juicily stewing at this present time. The dirty window-panes admitted but little daylight. Indeed, there are very few offices in Paris where it is possible to write without lamplight before ten in the morning in the month of February, for they are all

left to very natural neglect; every one comes and no one stays; no one has any personal interest in a scene of mere routine—neither the attorney, nor the counsel, nor the clerks, trouble themselves about the appearance of a place which, to the youths, is a schoolroom; to the clients, a passage; to the chief, a laboratory. The greasy furniture is handed down to successive owners with such scrupulous care, that in some offices may still be seen boxes of *remainders*, machines for twisting parchment gut, and bags left by the prosecuting parties of the Châtelet (abbreviated to *Chlet*)—a Court which, under the old order of things, represented the present Court of First Instance (or County Court).

So in this dark office, thick with dust, there was, as in all its fellows, something repulsive to the clients—something which made it one of the most hideous monstrosities of Paris. Nay, were it not for the mouldy sacristies where prayers are weighed out and paid for like groceries and for the old-clothes shops, where flutter the rags that blight all the illusions of life by showing us the last end of all our festivities—an attorney's office would be, of all social marts, the most loathsome. But we might say the same of the gambling-hell, of the Law Court, of the lottery office, of the brothel.

But why? In these places, perhaps, the drama being played in a man's soul makes him indifferent to accessories, which would also account for the single-mindedness of great thinkers and men of great ambitions.

'Where is my penknife?'

'I am eating my breakfast.'

'You go and be hanged! here is a blot on the copy.'

'Silence, gentlemen!'

These various exclamations were uttered simultaneously at the moment when the old client shut the door with the sort of humility which disfigures the movements of a man down on his luck. The stranger tried to smile, but the muscles of his face relaxed as he vainly

looked for some symptoms of amenity on the inexorably indifferent faces of the six clerks. Accustomed, no doubt, to gauge men, he very politely addressed the gutter-jumper, hoping to get a civil answer from this boy of all work.

'Monsieur, is your master at home?'

The pert messenger made no reply, but patted his ear with the fingers of his left hand, as much as to say, 'I am deaf.'

'What do you want, sir?' asked Godeschal, swallowing as he spoke a mouthful of bread big enough to charge a four-pounder, flourishing his knife and crossing his legs, throwing up one foot in the air to the level of his eyes.

'This is the fifth time I have called,' replied the victim. 'I wish to speak to M. Derville.'

'On business?'

'Yes, but I can explain it to no one but——'

'M. Derville is in bed; if you want to consult him on some difficulty, he does no serious work till midnight. But if you will lay the case before us, we could help you just as well as he can to——'

The stranger was unmoved; he looked timidly about him, like a dog who has got into a strange kitchen and expects a kick. By grace of their profession, lawyers' clerks have no fear of thieves; they did not suspect the owner of the box-coat, and left him to study the place, where he looked in vain for a chair to sit on, for he was evidently tired. Attorneys, on principle, do not have many chairs in their offices. The inferior client, being kept waiting on his feet, goes away grumbling, but then he does not waste time, which, as an old lawyer once said, is not allowed for when the bill is taxed.

'Monsieur,' said the old man, 'as I have already told you, I cannot explain my business to any one but M. Derville. I will wait till he is up.'

Boucard had finished his bill. He smelt the fragrance of his chocolate, rose from his cane arm-chair, went to the chimney-piece, looked the old man from head to foot,

stared at his coat, and made an indescribable grimace. He probably reflected that whichever way this client might be wrung, it would be impossible to squeeze out a centime, so he put in a few brief words to rid the office of a bad customer.

'It is the truth, monsieur. The chief only works at night. If your business is important, I recommend you to return at one in the morning.' The stranger looked at the head clerk with a bewildered expression, and remained motionless for a moment. The clerks, accustomed to every change of countenance, and the odd whimsicalities to which indecision or absence of mind gives rise in 'parties,' went on eating, making as much noise with their jaws as horses over a manger, and paying no further heed to the old man.

'I will come again to-night,' said the stranger at length, with the tenacious desire, peculiar to the unfortunate, to catch humanity at fault.

The only irony allowed to poverty is to drive Justice and Benevolence to unjust denials. When a poor wretch has convicted Society of falsehood, he throws himself more eagerly on the mercy of God.

'What do you think of that for a cracked pot?' said Simonnin, without waiting till the old man had shut the door.

'He looks as if he had been buried and dug up again,' said a clerk.

'He is some Colonel who wants his arrears of pay,' said the head clerk.

'No, he is a retired concierge,' said Godeschal.

'I bet you he is a nobleman,' cried Boucard.

'I bet you he has been a porter,' retorted Godeschal. 'Only porters are gifted by nature with shabby box-coats, as worn and greasy and frayed as that old body's. And did you see his trodden-down boots that let the water in, and his stock which serves for a shirt? He has slept in a dry arch.'

'He may be of noble birth, and yet have pulled the door-latch,' cried Desroches. 'It has been known!'

'No,' Boucard insisted, in the midst of laughter, 'I maintain that he was a brewer in 1789, and a Colonel in the time of the Republic.'

'I bet theatre tickets round that he never was a soldier,' said Godeschal.

'Done with you,' answered Boucard.

'Monsieur! Monsieur!' shouted the little messenger, opening the window.

'What are you at now, Simonnet?' asked Boucard.

'I am calling him that you may ask him whether he is a Colonel or a porter; he must know.'

All the clerks laughed. As to the old man, he was already coming upstairs again.

'What can we say to him?' cried Godeschal.

'Leave it to me,' replied Boucard.

The poor man came in nervously, his eyes cast down, perhaps not to betray how hungry he was by looking too greedily at the eatables.

'Monsieur,' said Boucard, 'will you have the kindness to leave your name, so that M. Derville may know——'

'Chabert.'

'The Colonel who was killed at Eylau?' asked Huré, who, having so far said nothing, was jealous of adding a jest to all the others.

'The same, Monsieur,' replied the good man, with antique simplicity. And he went away.

'Whew!'

'Done brown!'

'Poof!'

'Oh!'

'Ah!'

'Boum!'

'The old rogue!'

'Ting-a-ring-ting

'Sold again!'

'Monsieur Desroches, you are going to the play without paying,' said Huré to the fourth clerk, giving him a slap on the shoulder that might have killed a rhinoceros.

There was a storm of cat-calls, cries, and exclamations, which all the onomatopeia of the language would fail to represent.

'Which theatre shall we go to?'

'To the opera,' cried the head clerk.

'In the first place,' said Godeschal, 'I never mentioned which theatre. I might, if I chose, take you to see Madame Saqui.'

'Madame Saqui is not the play.'

'What is a play?' replied Godeschal. 'First, we must define the point of fact. What did I bet, gentlemen? A play. What is a play? A spectacle. What is a spectacle? Something to be seen——'

'But on that principle you would pay your bet by taking us to see the water run under the Pont Neuf!' cried Simonnin, interrupting him.

'To be seen for money,' Godeschal added.

'But a great many things are to be seen for money that are not plays. The definition is defective,' said Desroches.

'But do listen to me!'

'You are talking nonsense, my dear boy,' said Boucard.

'Is Curtius' a play?' said Godeschal.

'No,' said the head clerk, 'it is a collection of figures—but it is a spectacle.'

'I bet you a hundred francs to a sou,' Godeschal resumed, 'that Curtius' Waxworks forms such a show as might be called a play or theatre. It contains a thing to be seen at various prices, according to the place you choose to occupy.'

'And so on, and so forth!' said Simonnin.

'You mind I don't box your ears!' said Godeschal.

The clerks shrugged their shoulders.

'Besides, it is not proved that that old ape was not

making game of us,' he said, dropping his argument, which was drowned in the laughter of the other clerks. 'On my honour, Colonel Chabert is really and truly dead. His wife is married again to Comte Ferraud, Councillor of State. Madame Ferraud is one of our clients.'

'Come, the case is remanded till to-morrow,' said Boucard. 'To work, gentlemen. The deuce is in it; we get nothing done here. Finish copying that appeal; it must be handed in before the sitting of the Fourth Chamber, judgment is to be given to-day. Come, on you go!'

'If he really were Colonel Chabert, would not that impudent rascal Simonnin have felt the leather of his boot in the right place when he pretended to be deaf?' said Desroches, regarding this remark as more conclusive than Godeschal's.

'Since nothing is settled,' said Boucard, 'let us all agree to go to the upper boxes of the Français and see Talma in "Nero." Simonnin may go to the pit.'

And thereupon the head clerk sat down at his table, and the others followed his example.

'*Given in June eighteen hundred and fourteen* (in words),' said Godeschal. 'Ready?'

'Yes,' replied the two copying clerks and the engrosser, whose pens forthwith began to creak over the stamped paper, making as much noise in the office as a hundred cockchafers imprisoned by schoolboys in paper cages.

'*And we hope that my lords on the Bench*,' the extemporising clerk went on. 'Stop! I must read my sentence through again. I do not understand it myself.'

'Forty-six (that must often happen) and three forty-nines,' said Boucard.

'*We hope*,' Godeschal began again, after reading all through the document, '*that my lords on the Bench will not be less magnanimous than the august author of the decree, and that they will do justice against the miserable claims of*

the acting committee of the chief Board of the Legion of Honour by interpreting the law in the wide sense we have here set forth——'

'Monsieur Godeschal, wouldn't you like a glass of water?' said the little messenger.

'That imp of a boy!' said Boucard. 'Here, get on your double-soled shanks-mare, take this packet, and spin off to the Invalides.'

'*Here set forth*,' Godeschal went on. 'Add *in the interest of Madame la Vicomtesse* (at full length) *de Grandlieu*.'

'What!' cried the chief, 'are you thinking of drawing up an appeal in the case of Vicomtesse de Grandlieu against the Legion of Honour—a case for the office to stand or fall by? You are something like an ass! Have the goodness to put aside your copies and your notes; you may keep all that for the case of Navarreins against the Hospitals. It is late; I will draw up a little petition myself, with a due allowance of "inasmuch," and go to the Courts myself.'

This scene is typical of the thousand delights which, when we look back on our youth, make us say, 'Those were good times.'

At about one in the morning Colonel Chabert, self-styled, knocked at the door of Maître Derville, attorney to the Court of First Instance in the Department of the Seine. The porter told him that Monsieur Derville had not yet come in. The old man said he had an appointment, and was shown upstairs to the rooms occupied by the famous lawyer, who, notwithstanding his youth, was considered to have one of the longest heads in Paris.

Having rung, the distrustful applicant was not a little astonished at finding the head clerk busily arranging in a convenient order on his master's dining-room table the papers relating to the cases to be tried on the morrow. The clerk, not less astonished, bowed to the Colonel and begged him to take a seat, which the client did.

'On my word, Monsieur, I thought you were joking yesterday when you named such an hour for an interview,' said the old man, with the forced mirth of a ruined man, who does his best to smile.

'The clerks were joking, but they were speaking the truth too,' replied the man, going on with his work. 'M. Derville chooses this hour for studying his cases, taking stock of their possibilities, arranging how to conduct them, deciding on the line of defence. His prodigious intellect is freer at this hour—the only time when he can have the silence and quiet needed for the conception of good ideas. Since he entered the profession, you are the third person to come to him for a consultation at this midnight hour. After coming in the chief will discuss each case, read everything, spend four or five hours perhaps over the business, then he will ring for me and explain to me his intentions. In the morning from ten till two he hears what his clients have to say, then he spends the rest of his day in appointments. In the evening he goes into society to keep up his connections. So he has only the night for undermining his cases, ransacking the arsenal of the Code, and laying his plan of battle. He is determined never to lose a case; he loves his art. He will not undertake every case, as his brethren do. That is his life, an exceptionally active one. And he makes a great deal of money.'

As he listened to this explanation, the old man sat silent, and his strange face assumed an expression so bereft of intelligence, that the clerk, after looking at him, thought no more about him.

A few minutes later Derville came in, in evening dress; his head clerk opened the door to him, and went back to finish arranging the papers. The young lawyer paused for a moment in amazement on seeing in the dim light the strange client who awaited him. Colonel Chabert was as absolutely immovable as one of the wax figures in Curtius' collection to which Godeschal had

proposed to treat his fellow-clerks. This quiescence would not have been a subject for astonishment if it had not completed the supernatural aspect of the man's whole person. The old soldier was dry and lean. His forehead, intentionally hidden under a smoothly combed wig, gave him a look of mystery. His eyes seemed shrouded in a transparent film; you would have compared them to dingy mother-of-pearl with a blue iridescence changing in the gleam of the wax-lights. His face, pale, livid, and as thin as a knife, if I may use such a vulgar expression, was as the face of the dead. Round his neck was a tight black silk stock.

Below the dark line of this rag the body was so completely hidden in shadow that a man of imagination might have supposed the old head was due to some chance play of light and shade, or have taken it for a portrait by Rembrandt, without a frame. The brim of the hat which covered the old man's brow cast a black line of shadow on the upper part of the face. This grotesque effect, though natural, threw into relief by contrast the white furrows, the cold wrinkles, the colourless tone of the corpse-like countenance. And the absence of all movement in the figure, of all fire in the eye, were in harmony with a certain look of melancholy madness, and the deteriorating symptoms characteristic of senility, giving the face an indescribably ill-starred look which no human words could render.

But an observer, especially a lawyer, could also have read in this stricken man the signs of deep sorrow, the traces of grief which had worn into this face, as drops of water from the sky falling on fine marble at last destroy its beauty. A physician, an author, or a judge might have discerned a whole drama at the sight of its sublime horror, while the least charm was its resemblance to the grotesques which artists amuse themselves by sketching on a corner of the lithographic stone while chatting with a friend.

On seeing the attorney, the stranger started, with the convulsive thrill that comes over a poet when a sudden noise rouses him from a fruitful reverie in silence and at night. The old man hastily removed his hat and rose to bow to the young man; the leather lining of his hat was doubtless very greasy; his wig stuck to it without his noticing it, and left his head bare, showing his skull horribly disfigured by a scar beginning at the nape of the neck and ending over the right eye, a prominent seam all across his head. The sudden removal of the dirty wig which the poor man wore to hide this gash gave the two lawyers no inclination to laugh, so horrible to behold was this riven skull. The first idea suggested by the sight of this old wound was, 'His intelligence must have escaped through that cut.'

'If this is not Colonel Chabert, he is some thorough-going trooper!' thought Boucard.

'Monsieur,' said Derville, 'to whom have I the honour of speaking?'

'To Colonel Chabert.'

'Which?'

'He who was killed at Eylau,' replied the old man.

On hearing this strange speech, the lawyer and his clerk glanced at each other, as much as to say, 'He is mad.'

'Monsieur,' the Colonel went on, 'I wish to confide to you the secret of my position.'

A thing well worthy of note is the natural intrepidity of lawyers. Whether from the habit of receiving a great many persons, or from the deep sense of the protection conferred on them by the law, or from confidence in their mission, they enter everywhere, fearing nothing, like priests and physicians. Derville signed to Boucard, who vanished.

'During the day, sir,' said the attorney, 'I am not so miserly of my time, but at night every minute is precious. So be brief and concise. Go to the facts without

digression. I will ask for any explanations I may consider necessary. Speak.'

Having bid his strange client to be seated, the young man sat down at the table; but while he gave his attention to the deceased Colonel, he turned over the bundles of papers.

'You know, perhaps,' said the dead man, 'that I commanded a cavalry regiment at Eylau. I was of important service to the success of Murat's famous charge which decided the victory. Unhappily for me, my death is a historical fact, recorded in *Victoires et Conquêtes*, where it is related in full detail. We cut through the three Russian lines, which at once closed up and formed again, so that we had to repeat the movement back again. At the moment when we were nearing the Emperor, after having scattered the Russians, I came against a squadron of the enemy's cavalry. I rushed at the obstinate brutes. Two Russian officers, perfect giants, attacked me both at once. One of them gave me a cut across the head that crashed through everything, even a black silk cap I wore next my head, and cut deep into the skull. I fell from my horse. Murat came up to support me; he rode over my body, he and all his men, fifteen hundred of them—there might have been more! My death was announced to the Emperor, who as a precaution—for he was fond of me, was the Master—wished to know if there were no hope of saving the man he had to thank for such a vigorous attack. He sent two surgeons to identify me and bring me into Hospital, saying, perhaps too carelessly, for he was very busy, 'Go and see whether by any chance poor Chabert is still alive.' These rascally saw-bones, who had just seen me lying under the hoofs of the horses of two regiments, no doubt did not trouble themselves to feel my pulse, and reported that I was quite dead. The certificate of death was probably made out in accordance with the rules of military jurisprudence.'

As he heard his visitor express himself with complete lucidity, and relate a story so probable though so strange, the young lawyer ceased fingering the papers, rested his left elbow on the table, and with his head on his hand looked steadily at the Colonel.

'Do you know, Monsieur, that I am lawyer to the Comtesse Ferraud,' he said, interrupting the speaker, 'Colonel Chabert's widow?'

'My wife—yes, Monsieur. Therefore, after a hundred fruitless attempts to interest lawyers, who have all thought me mad, I made up my mind to come to you. I will tell you of my misfortunes afterwards; for the present, allow me to prove the facts, explaining rather how things must have fallen out rather than how they did occur. Certain circumstances, known, I suppose, to no one but the Almighty, compel me to speak of some things as hypothetical. The wounds I had received must presumably have produced tetanus, or have thrown me into a state analogous to that of a disease called, I believe, catalepsy. Otherwise how is it conceivable that I should have been stripped, as is the custom in time of war, and thrown into the common grave by the men ordered to bury the dead?

'Allow me here to refer to a detail of which I could know nothing till after the event, which, after all, I must speak of as my death. At Stuttgart, in 1814, I met an old quarter-master of my regiment. This dear fellow, the only man who chose to recognise me, and of whom I will tell you more later, explained the marvel of my preservation, by telling me that my horse was shot in the flank at the moment when I was wounded. Man and beast went down together, like a monk cut out of card-paper. As I fell, to the right or to the left, I was no doubt covered by the body of my horse, which protected me from being trampled to death or hit by a ball.

'When I came to myself, Monsieur, I was in a position and an atmosphere of which I could give you no idea if

I talked till to-morrow. The little air there was to breathe was foul. I wanted to move, and found no room. I opened my eyes, and saw nothing. The most alarming circumstance was the lack of air, and this enlightened me as to my situation. I understood that no fresh air could penetrate to me, and that I must die. This thought took off the sense of intolerable pain which had aroused me. There was a violent singing in my ears. I heard—or I thought I heard, I will assert nothing—groans from the world of dead among whom I was lying. Some nights I still think I hear those stifled moans; though the remembrance of that time is very obscure, and my memory very indistinct, in spite of my impressions of far more acute suffering I was fated to go through, and which have confused my ideas.

'But there was something more awful than cries; there was a silence such as I have never known elsewhere—literally, the silence of the grave. At last, by raising my hands and feeling the dead, I discerned a vacant space between my head and the human carrion above. I could thus measure the space, granted by a chance of which I knew not the cause. It would seem that, thanks to the carelessness and the haste with which we had been pitched into the trench, two dead bodies had leaned across and against each other, forming an angle like that made by two cards when a child is building a card castle. Feeling about me at once, for there was no time for play, I happily felt an arm lying detached, the arm of a Hercules! A stout bone, to which I owed my rescue. But for this unhoped-for help, I must have perished. But with a fury you may imagine, I began to work my way through the bodies which separated me from the layer of earth which had no doubt been thrown over us—I say us, as if there had been others living! I worked with a will, Monsieur, for here I am! But to this day I do not know how I succeeded in getting through the pile of flesh which formed a barrier between me and life. You

will say I had three arms. This crowbar, which I used cleverly enough, opened out a little air between the bodies I moved, and I economised my breath. At last I saw daylight, but through snow!

'At that moment I perceived that my head was cut open. Happily my blood, or that of my comrades, or perhaps the torn skin of my horse, who knows, had in coagulating formed a sort of natural plaister. But, in spite of it, I fainted away when my head came into contact with the snow. However, the little warmth left in me melted the snow about me; and when I recovered consciousness, I found myself in the middle of a round hole, where I stood shouting as long as I could. But the sun was rising, so I had very little chance of being heard. Was there any one in the fields yet? I pulled myself up, using my feet as a spring, resting on one of the dead, whose ribs were firm. You may suppose that this was not the moment for saying, "Respect courage in misfortune!" In short, Monsieur, after enduring the anguish, if the word is strong enough for my frenzy of seeing for a long time, yes, quite a long time, those cursed Germans flying from a voice they heard where they could see no one, I was dug out by a woman, who was brave or curious enough to come close to my head, which must have looked as though it had sprouted from the ground like a mushroom. This woman went to fetch her husband, and between them they got me to their poor hovel.

'It would seem that I must have again fallen into a catalepsy—allow me to use the word to describe a state of which I have no idea, but which, from the account given by my hosts, I suppose to have been the effect of that malady. I remained for six months between life and death; not speaking, or, if I spoke, talking in delirium. At last, my hosts got me admitted to the hospital at Heilsberg.

'You will understand, Monsieur, that I came out of

the womb of the grave as naked as I came from my mother's; so that six months afterwards, when I remembered, one fine morning, that I had been Colonel Chabert, and when, on recovering my wits, I tried to exact from my nurse rather more respect than she paid to any poor devil, all my companions in the ward began to laugh. Luckily for me, the surgeon, out of professional pride, had answered for my cure, and was naturally interested in his patient. When I told him coherently about my former life, this good man, named Sparchmann, signed a deposition, drawn up in the legal form of his country, giving an account of the miraculous way in which I had escaped from the trench dug for the dead, the day and hour when I had been found by my benefactress and her husband, the nature and exact spot of my injuries, adding to these documents a description of my person.

'Well, Monsieur, I have neither these important pieces of evidence, nor the declaration I made before a notary at Heilsberg, with a view to establishing my identity. From the day when I was turned out of that town by the events of war, I have wandered about like a vagabond, begging my bread, treated as a madman when I have told my story, without ever having found or earned a sou to enable me to recover the deeds which would prove my statements, and restore me to society. My sufferings have often kept me for six months at a time in some little town, where every care was taken of the invalid Frenchman, but where he was laughed at to his face as soon as he said he was Colonel Chabert. For a long time that laughter, those doubts, used to put me into rages which did me harm, and which even led to my being locked up at Stuttgart as a madman. And, indeed, as you may judge from my story, there was ample reason for shutting a man up.

'At the end of two years' detention, which I was compelled to submit to, after hearing my keepers say a thousand times, "Here is a poor man who thinks he is

Colonel Chabert" to people who would reply, "Poor fellow!" I became convinced of the impossibility of my own adventure. I grew melancholy, resigned, and quiet, and gave up calling myself Colonel Chabert, in order to get out of my prison, and see France once more. Oh, Monsieur! To see Paris again was a delirium which I——'

Without finishing his sentence, Colonel Chabert fell into a deep study, which Derville respected.

'One fine day,' his visitor resumed, 'one spring day, they gave me the key of the fields, as we say, and ten thalers, admitting that I talked quite sensibly on all subjects, and no longer called myself Colonel Chabert. On my honour, at that time, and even to this day, sometimes I hate my name. I wish I were not myself. The sense of my rights kills me. If my illness had but deprived me of all memory of my past life, I could be happy. I should have entered the service again under any name, no matter what, and should, perhaps, have been made Field-Marshal in Austria or Russia. Who knows?'

'Monsieur,' said the attorney, 'you have upset all my ideas. I feel as if I heard you in a dream. Pause for a moment, I beg of you.'

'You are the only person,' said the Colonel, with a melancholy look, 'who ever listened to me so patiently. No lawyer has been willing to lend me ten napoleons to enable me to procure from Germany the necessary documents to begin my lawsuit——'

'What lawsuit?' said the attorney, who had forgotten his client's painful position in listening to the narrative of his past sufferings.

'Why, Monsieur, is not the Comtesse Ferraud my wife? She has thirty thousand francs a year, which belong to me, and she will not give me a sou. When I tell lawyers these things—men of sense; when I propose—I, a beggar—to bring an action against a Count and

Countess; when I—a dead man—bring up as against a certificate of death a certificate of marriage and registers of births, they show me out, either with the air of cold politeness, which you all know how to assume to rid yourselves of a hapless wretch, or brutally, like men who think they have to deal with a swindler or a madman—it depends on their nature. I have been buried under the dead; but now I am buried under the living, under papers, under facts, under the whole of society, which wants to shove me underground again!'

'Pray resume your narrative,' said Derville.

'"Pray resume it!"' cried the hapless old man, taking the young lawyer's hand. 'That is the first polite word I have heard since——'

The Colonel wept. Gratitude choked his voice. The appealing and unutterable eloquence that lies in the eyes, in a gesture, even in silence, entirely convinced Derville, and touched him deeply.

'Listen, Monsieur,' said he; 'I have this evening won three hundred francs at cards. I may very well lay out half that sum in making a man happy. I will begin the inquiries and researches necessary to obtain the documents of which you speak, and until they arrive I will give you five francs a day. If you are Colonel Chabert, you will pardon the smallness of the loan as coming from a young man who has his fortune to make. Proceed.'

The Colonel, as he called himself, sat for a moment motionless and bewildered; the depth of his woes had no doubt destroyed his powers of belief. Though he was eager in pursuit of his military distinction, of his fortune, of himself, perhaps it was in obedience to the inexplicable feeling, the latent germ in every man's heart, to which we owe the experiments of alchemists, the passion for glory, the discoveries of astronomy and of physics, everything which prompts man to expand his being by multiplying himself through deeds or ideas. In his mind the *Ego* was now but a secondary object, just as the vanity

of success or the pleasure of winning become dearer to the gambler than the object he has at stake. The young lawyer's words were as a miracle to this man, for ten years repudiated by his wife, by justice, by the whole social creation. To find in a lawyer's office the ten gold pieces which had so long been refused him by so many people, and in so many ways! The Colonel was like the lady who, having been ill of a fever for fifteen years, fancied she had some fresh complaint when she was cured. There are joys in which we have ceased to believe; they fall on us, it is like a thunderbolt; they burn us. The poor man's gratitude was too great to find utterance. To superficial observers he seemed cold, but Derville saw complete honesty under this amazement. A swindler would have found his voice.

'Where was I?' said the Colonel, with the simplicity of a child or of a soldier, for there is often something of the child in a true soldier, and almost always something of the soldier in a child, especially in France.

'At Stuttgart. You were out of prison,' said Derville.

'You know my wife?' asked the Colonel.

'Yes,' said Derville, with a bow.

'What is she like?'

'Still quite charming.'

The old man held up his hand, and seemed to be swallowing down some secret anguish with the grave and solemn resignation that is characteristic of men who have stood the ordeal of blood and fire on the battlefield.

'Monsieur,' said he, with a sort of cheerfulness—for he breathed again, the poor Colonel; he had again risen from the grave; he had just melted a covering of snow less easily thawed than that which had once before frozen his head; and he drew a deep breath, as if he had just escaped from a dungeon—'Monsieur, if I had been a handsome young fellow, none of my misfortunes would have befallen me. Women believe in men when they flavour their speeches with the word Love. They hurry

then, they come, they go, they are everywhere at once; they intrigue, they assert facts, they play the very devil for a man who takes their fancy. But how could I interest a woman? I had a face like a Requiem. I was dressed like a *sans-culotte*. I was more like an Esquimaux than a Frenchman—I, who had formerly been considered one of the smartest of fops in 1799!—I, Chabert, Count of the Empire.

'Well, on the very day when I was turned out into the streets like a dog, I met the quartermaster of whom I just now spoke. This old soldier's name was Boutin. The poor devil and I made the queerest pair of broken-down hacks I ever set eyes on. I met him out walking; but though I recognised him, he could not possibly guess who I was. We went into a tavern together. In there, when I told him my name, Boutin's mouth opened from ear to ear in a roar of laughter, like the bursting of a mortar. That mirth, Monsieur, was one of the keenest pangs I have known. It told me without disguise how great were the changes in me! I was, then, unrecognisable even to the humblest and most grateful of my former friends!

'I had once saved Boutin's life, but it was only the repayment of a debt I owed him. I need not tell you how he did me this service; it was at Ravenna, in Italy. The house where Boutin prevented my being stabbed was not extremely respectable. At that time I was not a colonel, but, like Boutin himself, a common trooper. Happily there were certain details of this adventure which could be known only to us two, and when I recalled them to his mind his incredulity diminished. I then told him the story of my singular experiences. Although my eyes and my voice, he told me, were strangely altered, although I had neither hair, teeth, nor eyebrows, and was as colourless as an Albino, he at last recognised his Colonel in the beggar, after a thousand questions, which I answered triumphantly.

'He related his adventures; they were not less extraordinary than my own; he had lately come back from the frontiers of China, which he had tried to cross after escaping from Siberia. He told me of the catastrophe of the Russian campaign, and of Napoleon's first abdication. That news was one of the things which caused me most anguish!

'We were two curious derelicts, having been rolled over the globe as pebbles are rolled by the ocean when storms bear them from shore to shore. Between us we had seen Egypt, Syria, Spain, Russia, Holland, Germany, Italy and Dalmatia, England, China, Tartary, Siberia; the only thing wanting was that neither of us had been to America or the Indies. Finally, Boutin, who still was more locomotive than I, undertook to go to Paris as quickly as might be to inform my wife of the predicament in which I was. I wrote a long letter full of details to Madame Chabert. That, Monsieur, was the fourth! If I had had any relations, perhaps nothing of all this might have happened; but, to be frank with you, I am but a workhouse child, a soldier, whose sole fortune was his courage, whose sole family is mankind at large, whose country is France, whose only protector is the Almighty.—Nay, I am wrong! I had a father—the Emperor! Ah! if he were but here, the dear man! If he could see *his Chabert*, as he used to call me, in the state in which I am now, he would be in a rage! What is to be done? Our sun is set, and we are all out in the cold now. After all, political events might account for my wife's silence!

'Boutin set out. He was a lucky fellow! He had two bears, admirably trained, which brought him in a living. I could not go with him; the pain I suffered forbade my walking long stages. I wept, Monsieur, when we parted, after I had gone as far as my state allowed in company with him and his bears. At Carlsruhe I had an attack of neuralgia in the head, and lay

for six weeks on straw in an inn.—I should never have ended if I were to tell you all the distresses of my life as a beggar. Moral suffering, before which physical suffering pales, nevertheless excites less pity, because it is not seen. I remember shedding tears, as I stood in front of a fine house in Strassburg where I once had given an entertainment, and where nothing was given me, not even a piece of bread. Having agreed with Boutin on the road I was to take, I went to every post-office to ask if there were a letter or some money for me. I arrived at Paris without having found either. What despair I had been forced to endure! "Boutin must be dead!" I told myself, and in fact the poor fellow was killed at Waterloo. I heard of his death later, and by mere chance. His errand to my wife had, of course, been fruitless.

'At last I entered Paris—with the Cossacks. To me this was grief on grief. On seeing the Russians in France, I quite forgot that I had no shoes on my feet nor money in my pocket. Yes, Monsieur, my clothes were in tatters. The evening before I reached Paris I was obliged to bivouac in the woods of Claye. The chill of the night air no doubt brought on an attack of some nameless complaint which seized me as I was crossing the Faubourg Saint-Martin. I dropped almost senseless at the door of an ironmonger's shop. When I recovered I was in a bed in the Hôtel-Dieu. There I stayed very contentedly for about a month. I was then turned out; I had no money, but I was well, and my feet were on the good stones of Paris. With what delight and haste did I make my way to the Rue du Mont-Blanc, where my wife should be living in a house belonging to me! Bah! the Rue du Mont-Blanc was now the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin; I could not find my house; it had been sold and pulled down. Speculators had built several houses over my gardens. Not knowing that my wife had married M. Ferraud, I could obtain no information.

'At last I went to the house of an old lawyer who had been in charge of my affairs. This worthy man was dead, after selling his connection to a younger man. This gentleman informed me, to my great surprise, of the administration of my estate, the settlement of the moneys, of my wife's marriage, and the birth of her two children. When I told him that I was Colonel Chabert, he laughed so heartily that I left him without saying another word. My detention at Stuttgart had suggested possibilities of Charenton, and I determined to act with caution. Then, Monsieur, knowing where my wife lived, I went to her house, my heart high with hope.—Well,' said the Colonel, with a gesture of concentrated fury, 'when I called under an assumed name I was not admitted, and on the day when I used my own I was turned out of doors.

'To see the Countess come home from a ball or the play in the early morning, I have sat whole nights through, crouching close to the wall of her gateway. My eyes pierced the depths of the carriage, which flashed past me with the swiftness of lightning, and I caught a glimpse of the woman who is my wife and no longer mine. Oh, from that day I have lived for vengeance!' cried the old man in a hollow voice, and suddenly standing up in front of Derville. 'She knows that I am alive; since my return she has had two letters written with my own hand. She loves me no more!—I—I know not whether I love or hate her. I long for her and curse her by turns. To me she owes all her fortune, all her happiness; well, she has not sent me the very smallest pittance. Sometimes I do not know what will become of me!'

With these words the veteran dropped on to his chair again and remained motionless. Derville sat in silence, studying his client.

'It is a serious business,' he said at length, mechanically. 'Even granting the genuineness of the documents

to be procured from Heilsberg, it is not proved to me that we can at once win our case. It must go before three tribunals in succession. I must think such a matter over with a clear head; it is quite exceptional.'

'Oh,' said the Colonel, coldly, with a haughty jerk of his head, 'if I fail, I can die—but not alone.'

The feeble old man had vanished. The eyes were those of a man of energy, lighted up with the spark of desire and revenge.

'We must perhaps compromise,' said the lawyer.

'Compromise!' echoed Colonel Chabert. 'Am I dead, or am I alive?'

'I hope, Monsieur,' the attorney went on, 'that you will follow my advice. Your cause is mine. You will soon perceive the interest I take in your situation, almost unexampled in judicial records. For the moment I will give you a letter to my notary, who will pay you to your order fifty francs every ten days. It would be unbecoming for you to come here to receive alms. If you are Colonel Chabert, you ought to be at no man's mercy. I shall regard these advances as a loan; you have estates to recover; you are rich.'

This delicate compassion brought tears to the old man's eyes. Derville rose hastily, for it was perhaps not correct for a lawyer to show emotion; he went into the adjoining room, and came back with an unsealed letter, which he gave to the Colonel. When the poor man held it in his hand, he felt through the paper two gold pieces.

'Will you be good enough to describe the documents, and tell me the name of the town, and in what kingdom?' said the lawyer.

The Colonel dictated the information, and verified the spelling of the names of places; then he took his hat in one hand, looked at Derville, and held out the other—a horny hand, saying with much simplicity—

'On my honour, sir, after the Emperor, you are the

man to whom I shall owe most. You are a splendid fellow!'

The attorney clapped his hand into the Colonel's, saw him to the stairs, and held a light for him.

'Boucard,' said Derville to his head clerk, 'I have just listened to a tale that may cost me five-and-twenty louis. If I am robbed, I shall not regret the money, for I shall have seen the most consummate actor of the day.'

When the Colonel was in the street and close to a lamp, he took the two twenty-franc pieces out of the letter and looked at them for a moment under the light. It was the first gold he had seen for nine years.

'I may smoke cigars!' he said to himself.

About three months after this interview, at night, in Derville's room, the notary commissioned to advance the half-pay on Derville's account to his eccentric client, came to consult the attorney on a serious matter, and began by begging him to refund the six hundred francs that the old soldier had received.

'Are you amusing yourself with pensioning the old army?' said the notary, laughing—a young man named Crottat, who had just bought up the office in which he had been head clerk, his chief having fled in consequence of a disastrous bankruptcy.

'I have to thank you, my dear sir, for reminding me of that affair,' replied Derville. 'My philanthropy will not carry me beyond twenty-five louis; I have, I fear, already been the dupe of my patriotism.'

As Derville finished the sentence, he saw on his desk the papers his head clerk had laid out for him. His eye was struck by the appearance of the stamps—long, square, and triangular, in red and blue ink, which distinguished a letter that had come through the Prussian, Austrian, Bavarian, and French post-offices.

'Ah ha!' said he with a laugh, 'here is the last act of the comedy; now we shall see if I have been taken in!'

He took up the letter and opened it; but he could not read it; it was written in German.

'Boucard, go yourself and have this letter translated, and bring it back immediately,' said Derville, half opening his study door, and giving the letter to the head clerk.

The notary at Berlin, to whom the lawyer had written, informed him that the documents he had been requested to forward would arrive within a few days of this note announcing them. They were, he said, all perfectly regular and duly witnessed, and legally stamped to serve as evidence in law. He also informed him that almost all the witnesses to the facts recorded under these affidavits were still to be found at Eylau, in Prussia, and that the woman to whom M. le Comte Chabert owed his life was still living in a suburb of Heilsberg.

'This looks like business,' cried Derville, when Boucard had given him the substance of the letter. 'But look here, my boy,' he went on, addressing the notary, 'I shall want some information which ought to exist in your office. Was it not that old rascal Roguin——?'

'We will say that unfortunate, that ill-used Roguin,' interrupted Alexandre Crottat with a laugh.

'Well, was it not that ill-used man who has just carried off eight hundred thousand francs of his clients' money, and reduced several families to despair, who effected the settlement of Chabert's estate? I fancy I have seen that in the documents in our case of Ferraud.'

'Yes,' said Crottat. 'It was when I was third clerk; I copied the papers and studied them thoroughly. Rose Chapotel, wife and widow of Hyacinthe, called Chabert, Count of the Empire, grand officer of the Legion of Honour. They had married without settlement; thus, they held all the property in common. To the best of my recollection, the personalty was about six hundred thousand francs. Before his marriage, Comte Chabert had made a will in favour of the hospitals of Paris, by which he left them one-quarter of the fortune he might

possess at the time of his decease, the State to take the other quarter. The will was contested, there was a forced sale, and then a division, for the attorneys went at a pace. At the time of the settlement the monster who was then governing France handed over to the widow, by special decree, the portion bequeathed to the treasury.'

'So that Comte Chabert's personal fortune was no more than three hundred thousand francs?'

'Consequently so it was, old fellow!' said Crottat. 'You lawyers sometimes are very clear-headed, though you are accused of false practices in pleading for one side or the other.'

Colonel Chabert, whose address was written at the bottom of the first receipt he had given the notary, was lodging in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, Rue du Petit-Banquier, with an old quartermaster of the Imperial Guard, now a cowkeeper, named Vergniaud. Having reached the spot, Derville was obliged to go on foot in search of his client, for his coachman declined to drive along an unpaved street, where the ruts were rather too deep for cab wheels. Looking about him on all sides, the lawyer at last discovered at the end of the street nearest to the boulevard, between two walls built of bones and mud, two shabby stone gate-posts, much knocked about by carts, in spite of two wooden stumps that served as blocks. These posts supported a cross beam with a pent-house coping of tiles, and on the beam, in red letters, were the words, 'Vergniaud, dairyman.' To the right of this inscription were some eggs, to the left a cow, all painted in white. The gate was open, and no doubt remained open all day. Beyond a good-sized yard there was a house facing the gate, if indeed the name of house may be applied to one of the hovels built in the neighbourhood of Paris, which are like nothing else, not even the most wretched dwellings in the country, of which they have all the poverty without their poetry.

Indeed, in the midst of fields, even a hovel may have

a certain grace derived from the pure air, the verdure, the open country—a hill, a serpentine road, vineyards, quickset hedges, moss-grown thatch and rural implements; but poverty in Paris gains dignity only by horror. Though recently built, this house seemed ready to fall into ruins. None of its materials had found a legitimate use; they had been collected from the various demolitions which are going on every day in Paris. On a shutter made of the boards of a shop-sign Derville read the words, 'Fancy Goods.' The windows were all mismatched and grotesquely placed. The ground floor, which seemed to be the habitable part, was on one side raised above the soil, and on the other sunk in the rising ground. Between the gate and the house lay a puddle full of stable litter, into which flowed the rain-water and house waste. The back wall of this frail construction, which seemed rather more solidly built than the rest, supported a row of barred hutches, where rabbits bred their numerous families. To the right of the gate was the cowhouse, with a loft above for fodder; it communicated with the house through the dairy. To the left was a poultry yard, with a stable and pig-styes, the roofs finished, like that of the house, with rough deal boards nailed so as to overlap, and shabbily thatched with rushes.

Like most of the places where the elements of the huge meal daily devoured by Paris are every day prepared, the yard Derville now entered showed traces of the hurry that comes of the necessity for being ready at a fixed hour. The large pot-bellied tin cans in which milk is carried, and the little pots for cream, were flung pell-mell at the dairy door, with their linen-covered stoppers. The rags that were used to clean them, fluttered in the sunshine, riddled with holes, hanging to strings fastened to poles. The placid horse, of a breed known only to milk-women, had gone a few steps from the cart, and was standing in front of the stable, the door being shut. A goat was munching the shoots of a starved and dusty

vine that clung to the cracked yellow wall of the house. A cat, squatting on the cream jars, was licking them over. The fowls, scared by Derville's approach, scuttered away screaming, and the watch-dog barked.

'And the man who decided the victory at Eylau is to be found here!' said Derville to himself, as his eyes took in at a glance the general effect of the squalid scene.

The house had been left in charge of three little boys. One, who had climbed to the top of a cart loaded with hay, was pitching stones into the chimney of a neighbouring house, in the hope that they might fall into a saucepan; another was trying to get a pig into a cart by the back board, which rested on the ground; while the third, hanging on in front, was waiting till the pig had got into the cart, to hoist it by making the whole thing tilt. When Derville asked them if M. Chabert lived there, neither of them replied, but all three looked at him with a sort of bright stupidity, if I may combine those two words. Derville repeated his questions, but without success. Provoked by the saucy cunning of these three imps, he abused them with the sort of pleasantry which young men think they have a right to address to little boys, and they broke the silence with a horse-laugh. Then Derville was angry.

The Colonel, hearing him, now came out of a little low room, close to the dairy, and stood on the threshold of his doorway with indescribable military coolness. He had in his mouth a very finely coloured pipe—a technical phrase to a smoker—a humble, short clay pipe of the kind called '*brûle-gueule*.' He lifted the peak of a dreadfully greasy cloth cap, saw Derville, and came straight across the midden to join his benefactor the sooner, calling out in friendly tones to the boys—

'Silence in the ranks!'

The children at once kept a respectful silence, which showed the power the old soldier had over them.

'Why did you not write to me?' he said to Derville.

'Go along by the cowhouse! There—the path is paved there,' he exclaimed, seeing the lawyer's hesitancy, for he did not wish to wet his feet in the manure heap.

Jumping from one dry spot to another, Derville reached the door by which the Colonel had come out. Chabert seemed but ill pleased at having to receive him in the bedroom he occupied; and, in fact, Derville found but one chair there. The Colonel's bed consisted of some trusses of straw, over which his hostess had spread two or three of those old fragments of carpet, picked up heaven knows where, which milk-women use to cover the seats of their carts. The floor was simply the trodden earth. The walls, sweating saltpetre, green with mould, and full of cracks, were so excessively damp that on the side where the Colonel's bed was a reed mat had been nailed. The famous box-coat hung on a nail. Two pairs of old boots lay in a corner. There was not a sign of linen. On the worm-eaten table the *Bulletins de la Grande Armée*, reprinted by Plancher, lay open, and seemed to be the Colonel's reading; his countenance was calm and serene in the midst of this squalor. His visit to Derville seemed to have altered his features; the lawyer perceived in them traces of a happy feeling, a particular gleam set there by hope.

'Does the smell of a pipe annoy you?' he said, placing the dilapidated straw-bottomed chair for his lawyer.

'But, Colonel, you are dreadfully uncomfortable here!'

The speech was wrung from Derville by the distrust natural to lawyers, and the deplorable experience which they derive early in life from the appalling and obscure tragedies at which they look on.

'Here,' said he to himself, 'is a man who has of course spent my money in satisfying a trooper's three theological virtues—play, wine, and women!'

'To be sure, Monsieur, we are not distinguished for luxury here. It is a camp lodging, tempered by friend-

ship, but——' And the soldier shot a deep glance at the man of law—'I have done no one wrong, I have never turned my back on anybody, and I sleep in peace.'

Derville reflected that there would be some want of delicacy in asking his client to account for the sums of money he had advanced, so he merely said—

'But why would you not come to Paris, where you might have lived as cheaply as you do here, but where you would have been better lodged?'

'Why,' replied the Colonel, 'the good folks with whom I am living had taken me in and fed me *gratis* for a year. How could I leave them just when I had a little money. Besides, the father of those three pickles is an old *Egyptian*——

'An Egyptian!'

'We give that name to the troopers who came back from the expedition into Egypt, of which I was one. Not merely are all who get back brothers; Vergniaud was in my regiment. We have shared a draught of water in the desert; and besides, I have not yet finished teaching his brats to read.'

'He might have lodged you better for your money,' said Derville.

'Bah!' said the Colonel, 'his childreen sleep on the straw as I do. He and his wife have no better bed; they are very poor, you see. They have taken a bigger business than they can manage. But if I recover my fortune . . . However, it does very well.'

'Colonel, to-morrow, or next day, I shall receive your papers from Heilsberg. The woman who dug you out is still alive!'

'Curse the money! To think I haven't got any!' he cried, flinging his pipe on the ground.

Now, a well-coloured pipe is to a smoker a precious possession; but the impulse was so natural, the emotion so generous, that every smoker, and the excise office itself, would have pardoned this crime of treason to


D Murray Smith

tobacco. Perhaps the angels may have picked up the pieces.

'Colonel, it is an exceedingly complicated business,' said Derville as they left the room to walk up and down in the sunshine.

'To me,' said the soldier, 'it appears exceedingly simple. I was thought to be dead, and here I am! Give me back my wife and my fortune; give me the rank of General, to which I have a right, for I was made Colonel of the Imperial Guard the day before the battle of Eylau.'

'Things are not done so in the legal world,' said Derville. 'Listen to me. You are Colonel Chabert, I am glad to think it; but it has to be proved judicially to persons whose interest it will be to deny it. Hence, your papers will be disputed. That contention will give rise to ten or twelve preliminary inquiries. Every question will be sent under contradiction up to the supreme court, and give rise to so many costly suits, which will hang on for a long time, however eagerly I may push them. Your opponents will demand an inquiry, which we cannot refuse, and which may necessitate the sending of a commission of investigation to Prussia. But even if we hope for the best; supposing that justice should at once recognise you as Colonel Chabert—can we know how the questions will be settled that will arise out of the very innocent bigamy committed by the Comtesse Ferraud?

'In your case, the point of law is unknown to the Code, and can only be decided as a point in equity, as a jury decides in the delicate cases presented by the social eccentricities of some criminal prosecutions. Now, you had no children by your marriage; M. le Comte Ferraud has two. The judges might pronounce against the marriage where the family ties are weakest, to the confirmation of that where they are stronger, since it was contracted in perfect good faith. Would you be in a very

becoming moral position if you insisted, at your age, and in your present circumstances, in resuming your rights over a woman who no longer loves you? You will have both your wife and her husband against you, two important persons who might influence the Bench. Thus, there are many elements which would prolong the case; you will have time to grow old in the bitterest regrets.'

'And my fortune?'

'Do you suppose you had a fine fortune?'

'Had I not thirty thousand francs a year?'

'My dear Colonel, in 1799 you made a will before your marriage, leaving one-quarter of your property to hospitals.'

'That is true.'

'Well, when you were reported dead, it was necessary to make a valuation, and have a sale, to give this quarter away. Your wife was not particular about honesty to the poor. The valuation, in which she no doubt took care not to include the ready money or jewelry, or too much of the plate, and in which the furniture would be estimated at two-thirds of its actual cost, either to benefit her, or to lighten the succession duty, and also because a valuer can be held responsible for the declared value—the valuation thus made stood at six hundred thousand francs. Your wife had a right to half for her share. Everything was sold and bought in by her; she got something out of it all, and the hospitals got their seventy-five thousand francs. Then, as the remainder went to the State, since you had made no mention of your wife in your will, the Emperor restored to your widow by decree the residue which would have reverted to the Exchequer. So, now, what can you claim? Three hundred thousand francs, no more, and minus the costs.'

'And you call that justice!' said the Colonel, in dismay.

'Why, certainly——'

'A pretty kind of justice!'

'So it is, my dear Colonel. You see, that what you thought so easy is not so. Madame Ferraud might even choose to keep the sum given to her by the Emperor.'

'But she was not a widow. The decree is utterly void——'

'I agree with you. But every case can get a hearing. Listen to me. I think that under these circumstances a compromise would be both for her and for you the best solution of the question. You will gain by it a more considerable sum than you can prove a right to.'

'That would be to sell my wife!'

'With twenty-four thousand francs a year you could find a woman who, in the position in which you are, would suit you better than your own wife, and make you happier. I propose going this very day to see the Comtesse Ferraud and sounding the ground; but I would not take such a step without giving you due notice.'

'Let us go together.'

'What, just as you are?' said the lawyer. 'No, my dear Colonel, no. You might lose your case on the spot.'

'Can I possibly gain it?'

'On every count,' replied Derville. 'But, my dear Colonel Chabert, you overlook one thing. I am not rich; the price of my connection is not wholly paid up. If the bench should allow you a maintenance, that is to say, a sum advanced on your prospects, they will not do so till you have proved that you are Comte Chabert, grand officer of the Legion of Honour.'

'To be sure, I am a grand officer of the Legion of Honour; I had forgotten that,' said he simply.

'Well, until then,' Derville went on, 'will you not have to engage pleaders, to have documents copied, to keep the underlings of the law going, and to support yourself? The expenses of the preliminary inquiries

will, at a rough guess, amount to ten or twelve thousand francs. I have not so much to lend you—I am crushed as it is by the enormous interest I have to pay on the money I borrowed to buy my business; and you?—Where can you find it?'

Large tears gathered in the poor veteran's faded eyes, and rolled down his withered cheeks. This outlook of difficulties discouraged him. The social and the legal world weighed on his breast like a nightmare.

'I will go to the foot of the Vendôme column!' he cried. 'I will call out: "I am Colonel Chabert who rode through the Russian square at Eylau!"—The statue—he—he will know me.'

'And you will find yourself in Charenton.'

At this terrible name the soldier's transports collapsed.

'And will there be no hope for me at the Ministry of War?'

'The war office!' said Derville. 'Well, go there; but take a formal legal opinion with you, nullifying the certificate of your death. The government offices would be only too glad if they could annihilate the men of the Empire.'

The Colonel stood for a while, speechless, motionless, his eyes fixed, but seeing nothing, sunk in bottomless despair. Military justice is ready and swift; it decides with Turk-like finality, and almost always rightly. This was the only justice known to Chabert. As he saw the labyrinth of difficulties into which he must plunge, and how much money would be required for the journey, the poor old soldier was mortally hit in that power peculiar to man, and called the Will. He thought it would be impossible to live as party to a lawsuit; it seemed a thousand times simpler to remain poor and a beggar, or to enlist as a trooper if any regiment would pass him.

His physical and mental sufferings had already im-

paired his bodily health in some of the most important organs. He was on the verge of one of those maladies for which medicine has no name, and of which the seat is in some degree variable, like the nervous system itself, the part most frequently attacked of the whole human machine —a malady which may be designated as the heart-sickness of the unfortunate. However serious this invisible but real disorder might already be, it could still be cured by a happy issue. But a fresh obstacle, an unexpected incident, would be enough to wreck this vigorous constitution, to break the weakened springs, and produce the hesitancy, the aimless, unfinished movements, which physiologists know well in men undermined by grief.

Derville, detecting in his client the symptoms of extreme dejection, said to him—

'Take courage; the end of the business cannot fail to be in your favour. Only, consider whether you can give me your whole confidence and blindly accept the result I may think best for your interests.'

'Do what you will,' said Chabert.

'Yes, but you surrender yourself to me like a man marching to his death.'

'Must I not be left to live without a position, without a name? Is that endurable?'

'That is not my view of it,' said the lawyer. 'We will try a friendly suit, to annul both your death certificate and your marriage, so as to put you in possession of your rights. You may even, by Comte Ferraud's intervention, have your name replaced on the army-list as general, and no doubt you will get a pension.'

'Well, proceed then,' said Chabert. 'I put myself entirely in your hands.'

'I will send you a power of attorney to sign,' said Dervilie. 'Good-bye. Keep up your courage. If you want money, rely on me.'

Chabert warmly wrung the lawyer's hand, and remained standing with his back against the wall, not having the

energy to follow him excepting with his eyes. Like all men who know but little of legal matters, he was frightened by this unforeseen struggle.

During their interview, several times, the figure of a man posted in the street had come forward from behind one of the gate-pillars, watching for Derville to depart, and he now accosted the lawyer. He was an old man, wearing a blue waistcoat and a white-pleated kilt, like a brewer's; on his head was an otter-skin cap. His face was tanned, hollow-cheeked, and wrinkled, but ruddy on the cheek-bones by hard work and exposure to the open air.

'Asking your pardon, sir,' said he, taking Derville by the arm, 'if I take the liberty of speaking to you. But I fancied, from the look of you, that you were a friend of our General's.

'And what then?' replied Derville. 'What concern have you with him?—But who are you?' said the cautious lawyer.

'I am Louis Vergniaud,' he at once replied. 'I have two words to say to you.'

'So you are the man who has lodged Comte Chabert as I have found him?'

'Asking your pardon, sir, he has the best room. I would have given him mine if I had had but one; I could have slept in the stable. A man who has suffered as he has, who teaches my kids to read, a general, an Egyptian, the first lieutenant I ever served under—What do you think?—Of us all, he is best served. I shared what I had with him. Unfortunately, it is not much to boast of—bread, milk, eggs. Well, well; it 's neighbours' fare, sir. And he is heartily welcome.—But he has hurt our feelings.'

'He?'

'Yes, sir, hurt our feelings. To be plain with you, I have taken a larger business than I can manage, and he saw it. Well, it worried him; he must needs mind the

horse! I says to him, "Really, General——" "Bah!" says he, "I am not going to eat my head off doing nothing. I learned to rub a horse down many a year ago."—I had some bills out for the purchase money of my dairy—a fellow named Grados—Do you know him, sir?'

'But, my good man, I have not time to listen to your story. Only tell me how the Colonel offended you.'

'He hurt our feelings, sir, as sure as my name is Louis Vergniaud, and my wife cried about it. He heard from our neighbours that we had not a sou to begin to meet the bills with. The old soldier, as he is, he saved up all you gave him, he watched for the bill to come in, and he paid it. Such a trick! While my wife and me, we knew he had no tobacco, poor old boy, and went without. —Oh! now—yes, he has his cigar every morning! I would sell my soul for it—No, we are hurt. Well, so I wanted to ask you—for he said you were a good sort—to lend us a hundred crowns on the stock, so that we may get him some clothes, and furnish his room. He thought he was getting us out of debt, you see? Well, it 's just the other way; the old man is running us into debt—and hurt our feelings!—He ought not to have stolen a march on us like that. And we his friends, too! —On my word as an honest man, as sure as my name is Louis Vergniaud, I would sooner sell up and enlist than fail to pay you back your money——'

Derville looked at the dairyman, and stepped back a few paces to glance at the house, the yard, the manure-pool, the cowhouse, the rabbits, the children.

'On my honour, I believe it is characteristic of virtue to have nothing to do with riches!' thought he.

'All right, you shall have your hundred crowns, and more. But I shall not give them to you; the Colonel will be rich enough to help, and I will not deprive him of the pleasure.'

'And will that be soon?'

'Why, yes.'

'Ah, dear God! how glad my wife will be!' and the cowkeeper's tanned face seemed to expand.

'Now,' said Derville to himself, as he got into his cab again, 'let us call on our opponent. We must not show our hand, but try to see hers, and win the game at one stroke. She must be frightened. She is a woman. Now, what frightens women most? A woman is afraid of nothing but . . .'

And he set to work to study the Countess's position, falling into one of those brown studies to which great politicians give themselves up when concocting their own plans and trying to guess the secrets of a hostile Cabinet. Are not attorneys, in a way, statesmen in charge of private affairs?

But a brief survey of the situation in which the Comte Ferraud and his wife now found themselves is necessary for a comprehension of the lawyer's cleverness.

Monsieur le Comte Ferraud was the only son of a former Councillor in the old *Parlement* of Paris, who had emigrated during the Reign of Terror, and so, though he saved his head, lost his fortune. He came back under the Consulate, and remained persistently faithful to the cause of Louis XVIII., in whose circle his father had moved before the Revolution. He thus was one of the party in the Faubourg Saint-Germain which nobly stood out against Napoleon's blandishments. The reputation for capacity gained by young Count—then simply called Monsieur Ferraud — made him the object of the Emperor's advances, for he was often as well pleased at his conquests among the aristocracy as at gaining a battle. The Count was promised the restitution of his title, of such of his estates as had not been sold, and he was shown in perspective a place in the ministry or as senator.

The Emperor fell.

At the time of Comte Chabert's death, M. Ferraud

was a young man of six-and-twenty, without fortune, of pleasing appearance, who had had his successes, and whom the Faubourg Saint-Germain had adopted as doing it credit; but Madame la Comtesse Chabert had managed to turn her share of her husband's fortune to such good account that, after eighteen months of widowhood, she had about forty thousand francs a year. Her marriage to the young Count was not regarded as news in the circles of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Napoleon, approving of this union, which carried out his idea of fusion, restored to Madame Chabert the money falling to the Exchequer under her husband's will; but Napoleon's hopes were again disappointed. Madame Ferraud was not only in love with her lover; she had also been fascinated by the notion of getting into the haughty society which, in spite of its humiliation, was still predominant at the Imperial Court. By this marriage all her vanities were as much gratified as her passions. She was to become a real fine lady. When the Faubourg Saint-Germain understood that the young Count's marriage did not mean desertion, its drawing-rooms were thrown open to his wife.

Then came the Restoration. The Count's political advancement was not rapid. He understood the exigencies of the situation in which Louis XVIII. found himself; he was one of the inner circle who waited till the 'Gulf of Revolution should be closed'—for this phrase of the King's, at which the Liberals laughed so heartily, had a political sense. The order quoted in the long lawyer's preamble at the beginning of this story had, however, put him in possession of two tracts of forest, and of an estate which had considerably increased in value during its sequestration. At the present moment, though Comte Ferraud was a Councillor of State, and a Director-General, he regarded his position as merely the first step of his political career.

Wholly occupied as he was by the anxieties of con-

suming ambition, he had attached to himself, as secretary, a ruined attorney named Delbecq, a more than clever man, versed in all the resources of the law, to whom he left the conduct of his private affairs. This shrewd practitioner had so well understood his position with the Count as to be honest in his own interest. He hoped to get some place by his master's influence, and he made the Count's fortune his first care. His conduct so effectually gave the lie to his former life, that he was regarded as a slandered man. The Countess, with the tact and shrewdness of which most women have a share more or less, understood the man's motives, watched him quietly, and managed him so well, that she had made good use of him for the augmentation of her private fortune. She had contrived to make Delbecq believe that she ruled her husband, and had promised to get him appointed President of an inferior Court in some important provincial town, if he devoted himself entirely to her interests.

The promise of a place, not dependent on changes of ministry, which would allow of his marrying advantageously, and rising subsequently to a high political position, by being chosen Député, made Delbecq the Countess's abject slave. He had never allowed her to miss one of those favourable chances which the fluctuations of the Bourse and the increased value of property afforded to clever financiers in Paris during the first three years after the Restoration. He had trebled his protectress's capital, and all the more easily because the Countess had no scruples as to the means which might make her an enormous fortune as quickly as possible. The emoluments derived by the Count from the places he held she spent on the housekeeping, so as to reinvest her dividends; and Delbecq lent himself to these calculations of avarice without trying to account for her motives. People of that sort never trouble themselves about any secrets of which the discovery is not necessary to their own

interests. And, indeed, he naturally found the reason in the thirst for money, which taints almost every Parisian woman; and as a fine fortune was needed to support the pretensions of Comte Ferraud, the secretary sometimes fancied that he saw in the Countess's greed a consequence of her devotion to a husband with whom she still was in love. The Countess buried the secrets of her conduct at the bottom of her heart. There lay the secrets of life and death to her, there lay the turning-point of this history.

At the beginning of the year 1818 the Restoration was settled on an apparently immovable foundation; its doctrines of government, as understood by lofty minds, seemed calculated to bring to France an era of renewed prosperity, and Parisian society changed its aspect. Madame la Comtesse Ferraud found that by chance she had achieved for love a marriage that had brought her fortune and gratified ambition. Still young and handsome, Madame Ferraud played the part of a woman of fashion, and lived in the atmosphere of the Court. Rich herself, with a rich husband who was cried up as one of the ablest men of the royalist party, and, as a friend of the King, certain to be made Minister, she belonged to the aristocracy, and shared its magnificence. In the midst of this triumph she was attacked by a moral canker. There are feelings which women guess in spite of the care men take to bury them. On the first return of the King, Comte Ferraud had begun to regret his marriage. Colonel Chabert's widow had not been the means of allying him to anybody; he was alone and unsupported in steering his way in a course full of shoals and beset by enemies. Also, perhaps, when he came to judge his wife coolly, he may have discerned in her certain vices of education which made her unfit to second him in his schemes.

A speech he made, *à propos* of Talleyrand's marriage, enlightened the Countess, to whom it proved that if he had

still been a free man she would never have been Madame Ferraud. What woman could forgive this repentance? Does it not include the germs of every insult, every crime, every form of repudiation? But what a wound must it have left in the Countess's heart, supposing that she lived in the dread of her first husband's return? She had known that he still lived, and she had ignored him. Then during the time when she had heard no more of him, she had chosen to believe that he had fallen at Waterloo with the Imperial Eagle, at the same time as Boutin. She resolved, nevertheless, to bind the Count to her by the strongest of all ties, by a chain of gold, and vowed to be so rich that her fortune might make her second marriage indissoluble, if by chance Colonel Chabert should ever reappear. And he had reappeared; and she could not explain to herself why the struggle she dreaded had not already begun. Suffering, sickness, had perhaps delivered her from that man. Perhaps he was half mad, and Charenton might yet do her justice. She had not chosen to take either Delbecq or the police into her confidence, for fear of putting herself in their power, or of hastening the catastrophe. There are in Paris many women who, like the Countess Ferraud, live with an unknown moral monster, or on the brink of an abyss; a callus forms over the spot that tortures them, and they can still laugh and enjoy themselves.

'There is something very strange in Comte Ferraud's position,' said Derville to himself, on emerging from his long reverie, as his cab stopped at the door of the Hôtel Ferraud in the Rue de Varennes. 'How is it that he, so rich as he is, and such a favourite with the King, is not yet a peer of France? It may, to be sure, be true that the King, as Mme. de Grandlieu was telling me, desires to keep up the value of the *pairie* by not bestowing it right and left. And, after all, the son of a Councillor of the *Parlement* is not a Crillon nor a Rohan. A Comte Ferraud can only get into the Upper Chamber surrep-

titiously. But if his marriage were annulled, could he not get the dignity of some old peer who has only daughters transferred to himself, to the King's great satisfaction? At any rate this will be a good bogey to put forward and frighten the Countess,' thought he as he went up the steps.

Derville had without knowing it laid his finger on the hidden wound, put his hand on the canker that consumed Madame Ferraud.

She received him in a pretty winter dining-room, where she was at breakfast, while playing with a monkey tethered by a chain to a little pole with climbing bars of iron. The Countess was in an elegant wrapper; the curls of her hair, carelessly pinned up, escaped from a cap, giving her an arch look. She was fresh and smiling. Silver, gilding, and mother-of-pearl shone on the table, and all about the room were rare plants growing in magnificent china jars. As he saw Colonel Chabert's wife, rich with his spoil, in the lap of luxury and the height of fashion, while he, poor wretch, was living with a poor dairyman among the beasts, the lawyer said to himself—

'The moral of all this is that a pretty woman will never acknowledge as her husband, nor even as a lover, a man in an old box-coat, a tow wig, and boots with holes in them.'

A mischievous and bitter smile expressed the feelings, half philosophical and half satirical, which such a man was certain to experience—a man well situated to know the truth of things in spite of the lies behind which most families in Paris hide their mode of life.

'Good morning, Monsieur Derville,' said she, giving the monkey some coffee to drink.

'Madame,' said he, a little sharply, for the light tone in which she spoke jarred on him, 'I have come to speak with you on a very serious matter.'

'I am so *grieved*, M. le Comte is away——'

'I, Madame, am delighted. It would be grievous if

he could be present at our interview. Besides, I am informed through M. Delbecq that you like to manage your own business without troubling the Count.'

'Then I will send for Delbecq,' said she.

'He would be of no use to you, clever as he is,' replied Derville. 'Listen to me, Madame; one word will be enough to make you grave. Colonel Chabert is alive!'

'Is it by telling me such nonsense as that that you think you can make me grave?' said she with a shout of laughter. But she was suddenly quelled by the singular penetration of the fixed gaze which Derville turned on her, seeming to read to the bottom of her soul.

'Madame,' he said, with cold and piercing solemnity, 'you know not the extent of the danger which threatens you. I need say nothing of the indisputable authenticity of the evidence nor of the fulness of proof which testifies to the identity of Comte Chabert. I am not, as you know, the man to take up a bad cause. If you resist our proceedings to show that the certificate of death was false, you will lose that first case, and that matter once settled, we shall gain every point.'

'What, then, do you wish to discuss with me?'

'Neither the Colonel nor yourself. Nor need I allude to the briefs which clever advocates may draw up when armed with the curious facts of this case, or the advantage they may derive from the letters you received from your first husband before your marriage to your second.'

'It is false,' she cried, with the violence of a spoilt woman. 'I never had a letter from Comte Chabert; and if some one is pretending to be the Colonel, it is some swindler, some returned convict, like Coignard perhaps. It makes me shudder only to think of it. Can the Colonel rise from the dead, Monsieur? Bonaparte sent an aide-de-camp to inquire for me on his death, and to this day I draw the pension of three thousand francs granted to his widow by the Government. I have been perfectly in the right to turn away all the

Chaberts who have ever come, as I shall all who may come.'

'Happily we are alone, Madame. We can tell lies at our ease,' said he coolly, and finding it amusing to lash up the Countess's rage so as to lead her to betray herself, by tactics familiar to lawyers, who are accustomed to keep cool when their opponents or their clients are in a passion. 'Well, then, we must fight it out,' thought he, instantly hitting on a plan to entrap her and show her her weakness.

'The proof that you received the first letter, Madame, is that it contained some securities——'

'Oh, as to securities—that it certainly did not.'

'Then you received the letter,' said Derville, smiling. 'You are caught, Madame, in the first snare laid for you by an attorney, and you fancy you could fight against Justice——'

The Countess coloured, and then turned pale, hiding her face in her hands. Then she shook off her shame, and retorted with the natural impertinence of such women, 'Since you are the so-called Chabert's attorney, be so good as to——'

'Madame,' said Derville, 'I am at this moment as much your lawyer as I am Colonel Chabert's. Do you suppose I want to lose so valuable a client as you are?—But you are not listening.'

'Nay, speak on, Monsieur,' said she graciously.

'Your fortune came to you from M. le Comte Chabert, and you cast him off. Your fortune is immense, and you leave him to beg. An advocate can be very eloquent when a cause is eloquent in itself; there are here circumstances which might turn public opinion strongly against you.'

'But, Monsieur,' said the Comtesse, provoked by the way in which Derville turned and laid her on the gridiron, 'even if I grant that your M. Chabert is living, the law will uphold my second marriage on account of the

children, and I shall get off with the restitution of two hundred and twenty-five thousand francs to M. Chabert.'

'It is impossible to foresee what view the Bench may take of the question. If on one side we have a mother and children, on the other we have an old man crushed by sorrows, made old by your refusals to know him. Where is he to find a wife? Can the judges contravene the law? Your marriage with Colonel Chabert has priority on its side and every legal right. But if you appear under disgraceful colours, you might have an unlooked-for adversary. That, Madame, is the danger against which I would warn you.'

'And who is he?'

'Comte Ferraud.'

'Monsieur Ferraud has too great an affection for me, too much respect for the mother of his children——'

'Do not talk of such absurd things,' interrupted Derville, 'to lawyers, who are accustomed to read hearts to the bottom. At this instant Monsieur Ferraud has not the slightest wish to annul your union, and I am quite sure that he adores you; but if some one were to tell him that his marriage is void, that his wife will be called before the bar of public opinion as a criminal——'

'He would defend me, Monsieur.'

'No, Madame.'

'What reason could he have for deserting me, Monsieur?'

'That he would be free to marry the only daughter of a peer of France, whose title would be conferred on him by patent from the King."

The Countess turned pale.

'A hit!' said Derville to himself. 'I have you on the hip; the poor Colonel's case is won.'—'Besides, Madame,' he went on aloud, 'he would feel all the less remorse because a man covered with glory—a General, Count, Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour—is not

such a bad alternative; and if that man insisted on his wife's returning to him——'

'Enough, enough, Monsieur!' she exclaimed. 'I will never have any lawyer but you. What is to be done?'

'Compromise!' said Derville.

'Does he still love me?' she said.

'Well, I do not think he can do otherwise.'

The Countess raised her head at these words. A flash of hope shone in her eyes; she thought perhaps that she could speculate on her first husband's affection to gain her cause by some feminine cunning.

'I shall await your orders, Madame, to know whether I am to report our proceedings to you, or if you will come to my office to agree to the terms of a compromise,' said Derville, taking leave.

A week after Derville had paid these two visits, on a fine morning in June, the husband and wife, who had been separated by an almost supernatural chance, started from the opposite ends of Paris to meet in the office of the lawyer who was engaged by both. The supplies liberally advanced by Derville to Colonel Chabert had enabled him to dress as suited his position in life, and the dead man arrived in a very decent cab. He wore a wig suited to his face, was dressed in blue cloth with white linen, and wore under his waistcoat the broad red ribbon of the higher grade of the Legion of Honour. In resuming the habits of wealth he had recovered his soldierly style. He held himself up; his face, grave and mysterious-looking, reflected his happiness and all his hopes, and seemed to have acquired youth and *impasto*, to borrow a picturesque word from the painter's art. He was no more like the Chabert of the old box-coat than a cart-wheel double sou is like a newly coined forty-franc piece. The passer-by, only to see him, would have recognised at once one of the noble wrecks of our old army, one of the heroic men on whom our national glory is reflected,

as a splinter of ice on which the sun shines seems to reflect every beam. These veterans are at once a picture and a book.

When the Count jumped out of his carriage to go into Derville's office, he did it as lightly as a young man. Hardly had his cab moved off, when a smart brougham drove up, splendid with coats of arms. Madame la Comtesse Ferraud stepped out in a dress which, though simple, was cleverly designed to show how youthful her figure was. She wore a pretty drawn bonnet lined with pink, which framed her face to perfection, softening its outlines and making it look younger.

If the clients were rejuvenescent, the office was unaltered, and presented the same picture as that described at the beginning of this story. Simonnin was eating his breakfast, his shoulder leaning against the window, which was then open, and he was staring up at the blue sky in the opening of the courtyard enclosed by four gloomy houses.

'Ah, ha!' cried the little clerk, 'who will bet an evening at the play that Colonel Chabert is a General, and wears a red ribbon?'

'The chief is a great magician,' said Godeschal.

'Then there is no trick to play on him this time?' asked Desroches.

'His wife has taken that in hand, the Comtesse Ferraud,' said Boucard.

'What next?' said Godeschal. 'Is Comtesse Ferraud required to belong to two men?'

'Here she is,' answered Simonnin.

At this moment the Colonel came in and asked for Derville.

'He is at home, sir,' said Simonnin.

'So you are not deaf, you young rogue!' said Chabert, taking the gutter-jumper by the ear and twisting it, to the delight of the other clerks, who began to laugh, looking at the Colonel with the curious attention due to so singular a personage.

Comte Chabert was in Derville's private room at the moment when his wife came in by the door of the office.

'I say, Boucard, there is going to be a queer scene in the chief's room! There is a woman who can spend her days alternately, the odd with Comte Ferraud, and the even with Comte Chabert.'

'And in leap year,' said Godeschal, 'they must settle the *count* between them.'

'Silence, gentlemen, you can be heard!' said Boucard severely. 'I never was in an office where there was so much jesting as there is here over the clients.'

Derville had made the Colonel retire to the bedroom when the Countess was admitted.

'Madame,' he said, 'not knowing whether it would be agreeable to you to meet M. le Comte Chabert, I have placed you apart. If, however, you should wish it——'

'It is an attention for which I am obliged to you.'

'I have drawn up the memorandum of an agreement of which you and M. Chabert can discuss the conditions, here, and now. I will go alternately to him and to you, and explain your views respectively.'

'Let me see, Monsieur,' said the Countess impatiently.

Derville read aloud—

'"Between the undersigned:

'"M. Hyacinthe Chabert, Count, Maréchal de Camp, and Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour, living in Paris, Rue du Petit Banquier, on the one part;

'"And Madame Rose Chapotel, wife of the aforesaid M. le Comte Chabert, *née*——"'

'Pass over the preliminaries,' said she. 'Come to the ıditions.'

'Madame,' said the lawyer, 'the preamble briefly sets th the position in which you stand to each other. ıen, by the first clause, you acknowledge, in the pre-

sence of three witnesses, of whom two shall be notaries, and one the dairyman with whom your husband has been lodging, to all of whom your secret is known, and who will be absolutely silent—you acknowledge, I say, that the individual designated in the documents subjoined to the deed, and whose identity is to be further proved by an act of recognition prepared by your notary, Alexandre Crottat, is your first husband, Comte Chabert. By the second clause Comte Chabert, to secure your happiness, will undertake to assert his rights only under certain circumstances set forth in the deed.—And these,' said Derville, in a parenthesis, 'are none other than a failure to carry out the conditions of this secret agreement.—M. Chabert, on his part, agrees to accept judgment on a friendly suit, by which his certificate of death shall be annulled, and his marriage dissolved.'

'That will not suit me in the least,' said the Countess with surprise. 'I will be a party to no suit; you know why.'

'By the third clause,' Derville went on, with imperturbable coolness, you pledge yourself to secure to Hyacinthe Comte Chabert an income of twenty-four thousand francs on government stock held in his name, to revert to you at his death——'

'But it is much too dear!' exclaimed the Countess.

'Can you compromise the matter cheaper?'

'Possibly.'

'But what do you want, Madame?'

'I want—I will not have a lawsuit. I want——'

'You want him to remain dead?' said Derville, interrupting her hastily.

'Monsieur,' said the Countess, 'if twenty-four thousand francs a year are necessary, we will go to law——'

'Yes, we will go to law,' said the Colonel in a deep voice, as he opened the door and stood before his wife, with one hand in his waistcoat and the other hanging by his side—an attitude to which the recollection of his adventure gave horrible significance.

'It is he,' said the Countess to herself.

'Too dear!' the old soldier exclaimed. 'I have given you near on a million, and you are cheapening my misfortunes. Very well; now I will have you—you and your fortune. Our goods are in common, our marriage is not dissolved——'

'But Monsieur is not Colonel Chabert!' cried the Countess, in feigned amazement.

'Indeed!' said the old man, in a tone of intense irony. 'Do you want proofs? I found you in the Palais Royal——'

The Countess turned pale. Seeing her grow white under her rouge, the old soldier paused, touched by the acute suffering he was inflicting on the woman he had once so ardently loved; but she shot such a venomous glance at him that he abruptly went on—

'You were with La——'

'Allow me, Monsieur Derville,' said the Countess to the lawyer. 'You must give me leave to retire. I did not come here to listen to such dreadful things.'

She rose and went out. Derville rushed after her; but the Countess had taken wings, and seemed to have flown from the place.

On returning to his private room, he found the Colonel in a towering rage, striding up and down.

'In those times a man took his wife where he chose,' said he. 'But I was foolish, and chose badly; I trusted to appearances. She has no heart.'

'Well, Colonel, was I not right to beg you not to come?—I am now positive of your identity; when you came in, the Countess gave a little start, of which the meaning was unequivocal. But you have lost your chances. Your wife knows that you are unrecognisable.'

'I will kill her!'

'Madness! you will be caught and executed like any common wretch. Besides, you might miss! That would

be unpardonable. A man must not miss his shot when he wants to kill his wife.—Let me set things straight; you are only a big child. Go now. Take care of yourself; she is capable of setting some trap for you and shutting you up in Charenton. I will notify her of our proceedings to protect you against a surprise.'

The unhappy Colonel obeyed his young benefactor, and went away, stammering apologies. He slowly went down the dark staircase, lost in gloomy thoughts, and crushed perhaps by the blow just dealt him—the most cruel he could feel, the thrust that could most deeply pierce his heart—when he heard the rustle of a woman's dress on the lowest landing, and his wife stood before him.

'Come, Monsieur,' said she, taking his arm with a gesture like those familiar to him of old. Her action and the accent of her voice, which had recovered its graciousness, were enough to allay the Colonel's wrath, and he allowed himself to be led to the carriage.

'Well, get in!' said she, when the footman had let down the step.

And as if by magic, he found himself sitting by his wife in the brougham.

'Where to?' asked the servant.

'To Groslay,' said she.

The horses started at once, and carried them all across Paris.

'Monsieur,' said the Countess, in a tone of voice which betrayed one of those emotions which are rare in our lives, and which agitate every part of our being. At such moments the heart, fibres, nerves, countenance, soul, and body, everything, every pore even, feels a thrill. Life no longer seems to be within us; it flows out, springs forth, is communicated as by contagion, transmitted by a look, a tone of voice, a gesture, impressing our will on others. The old soldier started on hearing this single word, this first, terrible 'Monsieur!' But still it was at once a reproach and a pardon, a hope and

a despair, a question and an answer. This word included them all; none but an actress could have thrown so much eloquence, so many feelings into a single word. Truth is less complete in its utterance; it does not put everything on the outside; it allows us to see what is within. The Colonel was filled with remorse for his suspicions, his demands, and his anger; he looked down not to betray his agitation.

'Monsieur,' repeated she, after an imperceptible pause, 'I knew you at once.'

'Rosine,' said the old soldier, 'those words contain the only balm that can help me to forget my misfortunes.'

Two large tears rolled hot on to his wife's hands, which he pressed to show his paternal affection.

'Monsieur,' she went on, 'could you not have guessed what it cost me to appear before a stranger in a position so false as mine now is? If I have to blush for it, at least let it be in the privacy of my family. Ought not such a secret to remain buried in our hearts? You will forgive me, I hope, for my apparent indifference to the woes of a Chabert in whose existence I could not possibly believe. I received your letters,' she hastily added, seeing in his face the objection it expressed, 'but they did not reach me till thirteen months after the battle of Eylau. They were opened, dirty, the writing was unrecognisable; and after obtaining Napoleon's signature to my second marriage contract, I could not help believing that some clever swindler wanted to make a fool of me. Therefore, to avoid disturbing Monsieur Ferraud's peace of mind, and disturbing family ties, I was obliged to take precautions against a pretended Chabert. Was I not right, I ask you?'

'Yes, you were right. It was I who was the idiot, the owl, the dolt, not to have calculated better what the consequences of such a position might be.—But where are we going?' he asked, seeing that they had reached the barrier of La Chapelle.

'To my country house near Groslay, in the valley of Montmorency. There, Monsieur, we will consider the steps to be taken. I know my duties. Though I am yours by right, I am no longer yours in fact. Can you wish that we should become the talk of Paris? We need not inform the public of a situation, which for me has its ridiculous side, and let us preserve our dignity. You still love me,' she said, with a sad, sweet gaze at the Colonel, 'but have not I been authorised to form other ties? In so strange a position, a secret voice bids me trust to your kindness, which is so well known to me. Can I be wrong in taking you as the sole arbiter of my fate? Be at once judge and party to the suit. I trust in your noble character; you will be generous enough to forgive me for the consequences of faults committed in innocence. I may then confess to you: I love M. Ferraud. I believed that I had a right to love him. I do not blush to make this confession to you; even if it offends you, it does not disgrace us. I cannot conceal the facts. When fate made me a widow, I was not a mother.'

The Colonel with a wave of his hand bid his wife be silent, and for a mile and a half they sat without speaking a single word. Chabert could fancy he saw the two little ones before him.

'Rosine.'

'Monsieur?'

'The dead are very wrong to come to life again.'

'Oh, Monsieur, no, no! Do not think me ungrateful. Only, you find me a lover, a mother, while you left me merely a wife. Though it is no longer in my power to love, I know how much I owe you, and I can still offer you all the affection of a daughter.'

'Rosine,' said the old man in a softened tone, 'I no longer feel any resentment against you. We will forget everything,' he added, with one of those smiles which always reflect a noble soul; 'I have not so little delicacy

as to demand the mockery of love from a wife who no longer loves me.'

The Countess gave him a flashing look full of such deep gratitude that poor Chabert would have been glad to sink again into his grave at Eylau. Some men have a soul strong enough for such self-devotion, of which the whole reward consists in the assurance that they have made the person they love happy.

'My dear friend, we will talk all this over later when our hearts have rested,' said the Countess.

The conversation turned to other subjects, for it was impossible to dwell very long on this one. Though the couple came back again and again to their singular position, either by some allusion or of serious purpose, they had a delightful drive, recalling the events of their former life together and the times of the Empire. The Countess knew how to lend peculiar charm to her reminiscences, and gave the conversation the tinge of melancholy that was needed to keep it serious. She revived his love without awakening his desires, and allowed her first husband to discern the mental wealth she had acquired while trying to accustom him to moderate his pleasure to that which a father may feel in the society of a favourite daughter.

The Colonel had known the Countess of the Empire; he found her a Countess of the Restoration.

At last, by a cross-road, they arrived at the entrance to a large park lying in the little valley which divides the heights of Margency from the pretty village of Groslay. The Countess had there a delightful house, where the Colonel on arriving found everything in readiness for his stay there, as well as for his wife's. Misfortune is a kind of talisman whose virtue consists in its power to confirm our original nature; in some men it increases their distrust and malignancy, just as it improves the goodness of those who have a kind heart.

Sorrow had made the Colonel even more helpful and

good than he had always been, and he could understand some secrets of womanly distress which are unrevealed to most men. Nevertheless, in spite of his loyal trustfulness, he could not help saying to his wife—

'Then you felt quite sure you would bring me here?'

'Yes,' replied she, 'if I found Colonel Chabert in Derville's client.'

The appearance of truth she contrived to give to this answer dissipated the slight suspicions which the Colonel was ashamed to have felt. For three days the Countess was quite charming to her first husband. By tender attentions and unfailing sweetness she seemed anxious to wipe out the memory of the sufferings he had endured, and to earn forgiveness for the woes which, as she confessed, she had innocently caused him. She delighted in displaying for him the charms she knew he took pleasure in, while at the same time she assumed a kind of melancholy; for men are more especially accessible to certain ways, certain graces of the heart or of the mind which they cannot resist. She aimed at interesting him in her position, and appealing to his feelings so far as to take possession of his mind and control him despotically.

Ready for anything to attain her ends, she did not yet know what she was to do with this man; but at any rate she meant to annihilate him socially. On the evening of the third day she felt that in spite of her efforts she could not conceal her uneasiness as to the results of her manœuvres. To give herself a minute's reprieve she went up to her room, sat down before her writing-table, and laid aside the mask of composure which she wore in Chabert's presence, like an actress who, returning to her dressing-room after a fatiguing fifth act, drops half dead, leaving with the audience an image of herself which she no longer resembles. She proceeded to finish a letter she had begun to Delbecq, whom she desired to go in her name and demand of Derville the deeds

relating to Colonel Chabert, to copy them, and to come to her at once to Groslay. She had hardly finished when she heard the Colonel's step in the passage; uneasy at her absence, he had come to look for her.

'Alas!' she exclaimed, 'I wish I were dead! My position is intolerable . . .'

'Why, what is the matter?' asked the good man.

'Nothing, nothing!' she replied.

She rose, left the Colonel, and went down to speak privately to her maid, whom she sent off to Paris, impressing on her that she was herself to deliver to Delbecq the letter just written, and to bring it back to the writer as soon as he had read it. Then the Countess went out to sit on a bench sufficiently in sight for the Colonel to join her as soon as he might choose. The Colonel, who was looking for her, hastened up and sat down by her.

'Rosine,' said he, 'what is the matter with you?'

She did not answer.

It was one of those glorious, calm evenings in the month of June, whose secret harmonies infuse such sweetness into the sunset. The air was clear, the stillness perfect, so that far away in the park they could hear the voices of some children, which added a kind of melody to the sublimity of the scene.

'You do not answer me?' the Colonel said to his wife.

'My husband——' said the Countess, who broke off, started a little, and with a blush stopped to ask him, 'What am I to say when I speak of M. Ferraud?'

'Call him your husband, my poor child,' replied the Colonel, in a kind voice. 'Is he not the father of your children?'

'Well, then,' she said, 'if he should ask what I came here for, if he finds that I came here, alone, with a stranger, what am I to say to him? Listen, Monsieur,' she went on, assuming a dignified attitude, 'decide my fate, I am resigned to anything——'

'My dear,' said the Colonel, taking possession of his wife's hands, 'I have made up my mind to sacrifice myself entirely for your happiness——'

'That is impossible!' she exclaimed, with a sudden spasmodic movement. 'Remember that you would have to renounce your identity, and in an authenticated form.'

'What?' said the Colonel. 'Is not my word enough for you?'

The word 'authenticated' fell on the old man's heart, and roused involuntary distrust. He looked at his wife in a way that made her colour, she cast down her eyes, and he feared that he might find himself compelled to despise her. The Countess was afraid lest she had scared the shy modesty, the stern honesty, of a man whose generous temper and primitive virtues were known to her. Though these feelings had brought the clouds to their brow, they immediately recovered their harmony. This was the way of it. A child's cry was heard in the distance.

'Jules, leave your sister in peace,' the Countess called out.

'What, are your children here?' said Chabert.

'Yes, but I told them not to trouble you.'

The old soldier understood the delicacy, the womanly tact of so gracious a precaution, and took the Countess's hand to kiss it.

'But let them come,' said he.

The little girl ran up to complain of her brother.

'Mamma!'

'Mamma!'

'It was Jules——'

'It was her——'

Their little hands were held out to their mother, and the two childish voices mingled; it was an unexpected and charming picture.

'Poor little things!' cried the Countess, no longer restraining her tears, 'I shall have to leave them. To

whom will the law assign them? A mother's heart cannot be divided; I want them, I want them.'

'Are you making mamma cry?' said Jules, looking fiercely at the Colonel.

'Silence, Jules!' said the mother in a decided tone.

The two children stood speechless, examining their mother and the stranger with a curiosity which it is impossible to express in words.

'Oh yes!' she cried. 'If I am separated from the Count, only leave me my children, and I will submit to anything . . .'

This was the decisive speech which gained all that she had hoped from it.

'Yes,' exclaimed the Colonel, as if he were ending a sentence already begun in his mind, 'I must return underground again. I had told myself so already.'

'Can I accept such a sacrifice?' replied his wife. 'If some men have died to save a mistress's honour, they gave their life but once. But in this case you would be giving your life every day. No, no. It is impossible. If it were only your life, it would be nothing; but to sign a declaration that you are not Colonel Chabert, to acknowledge yourself an impostor, to sacrifice your honour, and live a lie every hour of the day! Human devotion cannot go so far. Only think!—No. But for my poor children I would have fled with you by this time to the other end of the world.'

'But,' said Chabert, 'cannot I live here in your little lodge as one of your relations! I am as worn out as a cracked cannon; I want nothing but a little tobacco and the *Constitutionnel*.'

The Countess melted into tears. There was a contest of generosity between the Comtesse Ferraud and Colonel Chabert, and the soldier came out victorious. One evening, seeing this mother with her children, the soldier was bewitched by the touching grace of a family picture in the country, in the shade and the silence; he made a

resolution to remain dead, and, frightened no longer at the authentication of a deed, he asked what he was to do to secure beyond all risk the happiness of this family.

'Do exactly as you like,' said the Countess. 'I declare to you that I will have nothing to do with this affair. I ought not.'

Delbecq had arrived some days before, and in obedience to the Countess's verbal instructions, the intendant had succeeded in gaining the old soldier's confidence. So on the following morning Colonel Chabert went with the erewhile attorney to Saint-Leu-Taverny, where Delbecq had caused the notary to draw up an affidavit in such terms that, after hearing it read, the Colonel started up and walked out of the office.

'Turf and thunder! What a fool you must think me! Why, I should make myself out a swindler!' he exclaimed.

'Indeed, Monsieur,' said Delbecq, 'I should advise you not to sign in haste. In your place I would get at least thirty thousand francs a year out of the bargain. Madame would pay them.'

After annihilating this scoundrel *emeritus* by the lightning look of an honest man insulted, the Colonel rushed off, carried away by a thousand contrary emotions. He was suspicious, indignant, and calm again by turns.

Finally he made his way back into the park of Groslay by a gap in a fence, and slowly walked on to sit down and rest, and meditate at his ease, in a little room under a gazebo, from which the road to Saint-Leu could be seen. The path being strewn with the yellowish sand which is used instead of river-gravel, the Countess, who was sitting in the upper room of this little summer-house, did not hear the Colonel's approach, for she was too much preoccupied with the success of her business to pay the smallest attention to the slight noise made by her husband. Nor did the old man notice that his wife was in the room over him.

'Well, Monsieur Delbecq, has he signed?' the Countess asked her secretary, whom she saw alone on the road beyond the hedge of a haha.

'No, Madame. I do not even know what has become of our man. The old horse reared.'

'Then we shall be obliged to put him into Charenton,' said she, 'since we have got him.'

The Colonel, who recovered the elasticity of youth to leap the haha, in the twinkling of an eye was standing in front of Delbecq, on whom he bestowed the two finest slaps that ever a scoundrel's cheeks received.

'And you may add that old horses can kick!' said he.

His rage spent, the Colonel no longer felt vigorous enough to leap the ditch. He had seen the truth in all its nakedness. The Countess's speech and Delbecq's reply had revealed the conspiracy of which he was to be the victim. The care taken of him was but a bait to entrap him in a snare. That speech was like a drop of subtle poison, bringing on in the old soldier a return of all his sufferings, physical and moral. He came back to the summer-house through the park gate, walking slowly like a broken man.

Then for him there was to be neither peace nor truce! From this moment he must begin the odious warfare with this woman of which Derville had spoken, enter on a life of litigation, feed on gall, drink every morning of the cup of bitterness. And then—fearful thought! where was he to find the money needful to pay the cost of the first proceedings? He felt such disgust of life, that if there had been any water at hand he would have thrown himself into it; that if he had had a pistol, he would have blown out his brains. Then he relapsed into the indecision of mind which, since his conversation with Derville at the dairyman's, had changed his character.

At last, having reached the kiosque, he went up to the gazebo, where little rose-windows afforded a view over each lovely landscape of the valley, and where he found

his wife seated on a chair. The Countess was gazing at the distance, and preserved a calm countenance, showing that impenetrable face which women can assume when resolved to do their worst. She wiped her eyes as if she had been weeping, and played absently with the pink ribbons of her sash. Nevertheless, in spite of her apparent assurance, she could not help shuddering slightly when she saw before her her venerable benefactor, standing with folded arms, his face pale, his brow stern.

'Madame,' he said, after gazing at her fixedly for a moment and compelling her to blush, 'Madame, I do not curse you—I scorn you. I can now thank the chance that has divided us. I do not feel even a desire for revenge; I no longer love you. I want nothing from you. Live in peace on the strength of my word; it is worth more than the scrawl of all the notaries in Paris. I will never assert my claim to the name I perhaps have made illustrious. I am henceforth but a poor devil named Hyacinthe, who asks no more than his share of the sunshine.—Farewell!'

The Countess threw herself at his feet; she would have detained him by taking his hands, but he pushed her away with disgust, saying—

'Do not touch me!'

The Countess's expression when she heard her husband's retreating steps is quite indescribable. Then, with the deep perspicacity given only by utter villainy, or by fierce worldly selfishness, she knew that she might live in peace on the word and the contempt of this loyal veteran.

Chabert, in fact, disappeared. The dairyman failed in business, and became a hackney-cab driver. The Colonel, perhaps, took up some similar industry for a time. Perhaps, like a stone flung into a chasm, he went falling from ledge to ledge, to be lost in the mire of rags that seethes through the streets of Paris.

Six months after this event, Derville, hearing no more of Colonel Chabert or the Comtesse Ferraud, supposed that they had no doubt come to a compromise, which the Countess, out of revenge, had had arranged by some other lawyer. So one morning he added up the sums he had advanced to the said Chabert with the costs, and begged the Comtesse Ferraud to claim from M. le Comte Chabert the amount of the bill, assuming that she would know where to find her first husband.

The very next day Comte Ferraud's man of business, lately appointed President of the County Court in a town of some importance, wrote this distressing note to Derville :—

'MONSIEUR,—

'Madame la Comtesse Ferraud desires me to inform you that your client took complete advantage of your confidence, and that the individual calling himself Comte Chabert has acknowledged that he came forward under false pretences.—Yours etc., DELBECQ.'

'One comes across people who are, on my honour, too stupid by half,' cried Derville. 'They don't deserve to be Christians! Be humane, generous, philanthropical, and a lawyer, and you are bound to be cheated! There is a piece of business that will cost me two thousand-franc notes!'

Some time after receiving this letter, Derville went to the Palais de Justice in search of a pleader to whom he wished to speak, and who was employed in the Police Court. As chance would have it, Derville went into Court Number 6 at the moment when the Presiding Magistrate was sentencing one Hyacinthe to two months' imprisonment as a vagabond, and subsequently to be taken to the Mendicity House of Detention, a sentence which, by magistrate's law, is equivalent to perpetual imprisonment. On hearing the name of Hyacinthe, Derville looked

at the delinquent, sitting between two *gendarmes* on the bench for the accused, and recognised in the condemned man his false Colonel Chabert.

The old soldier was placid, motionless, almost absent-minded. In spite of his rags, in spite of the misery stamped on his countenance, it gave evidence of noble pride. His eye had a stoical expression which no magistrate ought to have misunderstood; but as soon as a man has fallen into the hands of justice, he is no more than a moral entity, a matter of law or of fact, just as to statists he has become a zero.

When the veteran was taken back to the lock-up, to be removed later with the batch of vagabonds at that moment at the bar, Derville availed himself of the privilege accorded to lawyers of going wherever they please in the Courts, and followed him to the lock-up, where he stood scrutinising him for some minutes, as well as the curious crew of beggars among whom he found himself. The passage to the lock-up at that moment afforded one of those spectacles which, unfortunately, neither legislators, nor philanthropists, nor painters, nor writers come to study. Like all the laboratories of the law, this ante-room is a dark and malodorous place; along the walls runs a wooden seat, blackened by the constant presence there of the wretches who come to this meeting-place of every form of social squalor, where not one of them is missing.

A poet might say that the day was ashamed to light up this dreadful sewer through which so much misery flows! There is not a spot on that plank where some crime has not sat, in embryo or matured; not a corner where a man has never stood who, driven to despair by the blight which justice has set upon him after his first fault, has not there begun a career, at the end of which looms the guillotine or the pistol-snap of the suicide. All who fall on the pavement of Paris rebound against these yellow-grey walls, on which a philanthropist who was not

a speculator, might read a justification of the numerous suicides complained of by hypocritical writers who are incapable of taking a step to prevent them—for that justification is written in that ante-room, like a preface to the dramas of the Morgue, or to those enacted on the Place de la Grève.

At this moment Colonel Chabert was sitting among these men—men with coarse faces, clothed in the horrible livery of misery, and silent at intervals, or talking in a low tone, for three gendarmes on duty paced to and fro, their sabres clattering on the floor.

'Do you recognise me?' said Derville to the old man, standing in front of him.

'Yes, sir,' said Chabert, rising.

'If you are an honest man,' Derville went on in an undertone, 'how could you remain in my debt?'

The old soldier blushed as a young girl might when accused by her mother of a clandestine love affair.

'What! Madame Ferraud has not paid you?' cried he in a loud voice.

'Paid me?' said Derville. 'She wrote to me that you were a swindler.'

The Colonel cast up his eyes in a sublime impulse of horror and imprecation, as if to call heaven to witness to this fresh subterfuge.

'Monsieur,' said he, in a voice that was calm by sheer huskiness, 'get the gendarmes to allow me to go into the lock-up, and I will sign an order which will certainly be honoured.'

At a word from Derville to the sergeant he was allowed to take his client into the room, where Hyacinthe wrote a few lines, and addressed them to the Comtesse Ferraud.

'Send her that,' said the soldier, 'and you will be paid your costs and the money you advanced. Believe me, Monsieur, if I have not shown you the gratitude I owe you for your kind offices, it is not the less there,' and he

laid his hand on his heart. 'Yes, it is there, deep and sincere. But what can the unfortunate do? They live, and that is all.'

'What!' said Derville. 'Did you not stipulate for an allowance?'

'Do not speak of it!' cried the old man. 'You cannot conceive how deep my contempt is for the outside life to which most men cling. I was suddenly attacked by a sickness—disgust of humanity. When I think that Napoleon is at Saint Helena, everything on earth is a matter of indifference to me. I can no longer be a soldier; that is my only real grief. After all,' he added with a gesture of childish simplicity, 'it is better to enjoy luxury of feeling than of dress. For my part, I fear nobody's contempt.'

And the Colonel sat down on his bench again.

Derville went away. On returning to his office, he sent Godeschal, at that time his second clerk, to the Comtesse Ferraud, who, on reading the note, at once paid the sum due to Comte Chabert's lawyer.

In 1840, towards the end of June, Godeschal, now himself an attorney, went to Ris with Derville, to whom he had succeeded. When they reached the avenue leading from the high road to Bicêtre, they saw, under one of the elm-trees by the wayside, one of those old, broken, and hoary paupers who have earned the Marshal's staff among beggars by living on at Bicêtre as poor women live on at la Salpêtrière. This man, one of the two thousand poor creatures who are lodged in the infirmary for the aged, was seated on a corner-stone, and seemed to have concentrated all his intelligence on an operation well known to these pensioners, which consists in drying their snuffy pocket-handkerchiefs in the sun, perhaps to save washing them. This old man had an attractive countenance. He was dressed in the reddish cloth wrapper-coat which the workhouse affords to its inmates, a sort of horrible livery.

'I say, Derville,' said Godeschal to his travelling companion, 'look at that old fellow. Isn't he like those grotesque carved figures we get from Germany? And it is alive, perhaps it is happy.'

Derville looked at the poor man through his eyeglass, and with a little exclamation of surprise he said—

'That old man, my dear fellow, is a whole poem, or, as the romantics say, a drama.—Did you ever meet the Comtesse Ferraud?'

'Yes; she is a clever woman, and agreeable; but rather too pious,' said Godeschal.

'That old Bicêtre pauper is her lawful husband, Comte Chabert, the old Colonel. She has had him sent here, no doubt. And if he is in this workhouse instead of living in a mansion, it is solely because he reminded the pretty Countess that he had taken her, like a hackney cab, on the street. I can remember now the tiger's glare she shot at him at that moment.'

This opening having excited Godeschal's curiosity, Derville related the story here told.

Two days later, on Monday morning, as they returned to Paris, the two friends looked again at Bicêtre, and Derville proposed that they should call on Colonel Chabert. Half-way up the avenue they found the old man sitting on the trunk of a felled tree; with his stick in one hand, he was amusing himself with drawing lines in the sand. On looking at him narrowly, they perceived that he had been breakfasting elsewhere than at Bicêtre.

'Good morning, Colonel Chabert,' said Derville.

'Not Chabert! not Chabert! My name is Hyacinthe,' replied the veteran. 'I am no longer a man, I am No. 164, Room 7,' he added, looking at Derville with timid anxiety, the fear of an old man and a child.—'Are you going to visit the man condemned to death?' he asked after a moment's silence. 'He is not married! He is very lucky!'

'Poor fellow!' said Godeschal. 'Would you like something to buy snuff?'

With all the simplicity of a street Arab, the Colonel eagerly held out his hand to the two strangers, who each gave him a twenty-franc piece; he thanked them with a puzzled look, saying—

'Brave troopers!'

He ported arms, pretended to take aim at them, and shouted with a smile—

'Fire! both arms! *Vive Napoléon!*' And he drew a flourish in the air with his stick.

'The nature of his wound has no doubt made him childish,' said Derville.

'Childish! he?' said another old pauper, who was looking on. 'Why, there are days when you had better not tread on his corns. He is an old rogue, full of philosophy and imagination. But to-day, what can you expect! He has had his Monday treat.—He was here, Monsieur, so long ago as 1820. At that time a Prussian officer, whose chaise was crawling up the hill of Villejuif, came by on foot. We two were together, Hyacinthe and I, by the roadside. The officer, as he walked, was talking to another, a Russian, or some animal of the same species, and when the Prussian saw the old boy, just to make fun, he said to him, 'Here is an old cavalry man who must have been at Rossbach.'—'I was too young to be there,' said Hyacinthe. 'But I was at Jena.' And the Prussian made off pretty quick, without asking any more questions.'

'What a destiny!' exclaimed Derville. 'Taken out of the Foundling Hospital to die in the Infirmary for the Aged, after helping Napoleon between whiles to conquer Egypt and Europe.—Do you know, my dear fellow,' Derville went on after a pause, 'there are in modern society three men who can never think well of the world—the priest, the doctor, and the man of law? And they wear black robes, perhaps because they are in mourning for every virtue and every illusion. The most hapless of the three is the lawyer. When a man comes

in search of the priest, he is prompted by repentance, by remorse, by beliefs which make him interesting, which elevate him and comfort the soul of the intercessor whose task will bring him a sort of gladness; he purifies, repairs, and reconciles. But we lawyers, we see the same evil feelings repeated again and again, nothing can correct them; our offices are sewers which can never be cleansed.

'How many things have I learned in the exercise of my profession! I have seen a father die in a garret, deserted by two daughters, to whom he had given forty thousand francs a year! I have known wills burnt; I have seen mothers robbing their children, wives killing their husbands, and working on the love they could inspire to make the men idiotic or mad, that they might live in peace with a lover. I have seen women teaching the child of their marriage such tastes as must bring it to the grave in order to benefit the child of an illicit affection. I could not tell you all I have seen, for I have seen crimes against which justice is impotent. In short, all the horrors that romancers suppose they have invented are still below the truth.—You will know something of these pretty things; as for me, I am going to live in the country with my wife. I have a horror of Paris.'

'I have seen plenty of them already in Desroches' office,' replied Godeschal.

PARIS, *February-March* 1832.

THE COMMISSION IN LUNACY

Dedicated to Monsieur le Contre-Amiral Bazoche, Governor of the Isle of Bourbon, by the grateful writer,

De Balzac.

In 1828, at about one o'clock one morning, two persons came out of a large house in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, near the Elysée-Bourbon. One was a famous doctor, Horace Bianchon; the other was one of the most elegant men in Paris, the Baron de Rastignac; they were friends of long standing. Each had sent away his carriage, and no cab was to be seen in the street; but the night was fine, and the pavement dry.

'We will walk as far as the Boulevard,' said Eugène de Rastignac to Bianchon. 'You can get a hackney cab at the club; there is always one to be found there till daybreak. Come with me as far as my house.'

'With pleasure.'

'Well, and what have you to say about it?'

'About that woman?' said the doctor coldly.

'There I recognise my Bianchon!' exclaimed Rastignac.

'Why, how?'

'Well, my dear fellow, you speak of the Marquise d'Espard as if she were a case for your hospital.'

'Do you want to know what I think, Eugène? If you throw over Madame de Nucingen for this Marquise, you will swop a one-eyed horse for a blind one.'

'Madame de Nucingen is six-and-thirty, Bianchon.'

'And this woman is three-and-thirty,' said the doctor quickly.

'Her worst enemies only say six-and-twenty.'

'My dear boy, when you really want to know a woman's age, look at her temples and the tip of her nose. Whatever women may achieve with their cosmetics, they can do nothing against those incorruptible witnesses to their experiences. There each year of life has left its stigmata. When a woman's temples are flaccid, seamed, withered in a particular way; when at the tip of her nose you see those minute specks, which look like the imperceptible black smuts which are shed in London by the chimneys in which coal is burnt. . . . Your servant, sir! That woman is more than thirty. She may be handsome, witty, loving—whatever you please, but she is past thirty, she is arriving at maturity. I do not blame men who attach themselves to that kind of woman; only, a man of your superior distinction must not mistake a winter pippin for a little summer apple, smiling on the bough, and waiting for you to crunch it. Love never goes to study the registers of birth and marriage; no one loves a woman because she is handsome or ugly, stupid or clever; we love because we love.'

'Well, for my part, I love for quite other reasons. She is Marquise d'Espard; she was a Blamont-Chauvry; she is the fashion; she has soul; her foot is as pretty as the Duchesse de Berri's; she has perhaps a hundred thousand francs a year—some day, perhaps, I may marry her! In short, she will put me into a position which will enable me to pay my debts.'

'I thought you were rich,' interrupted Bianchon.

'Bah! I have twenty thousand francs a year—just enough to keep up my stables. I was thoroughly done, my dear fellow, in that Nucingen business; I will tell you about that.—I have got my sisters married; that is the clearest profit I can show since we last met; and I

would rather have them provided for than have five hundred thousand francs a year. Now, what would you have me do? I am ambitious. To what can Madame de Nucingen lead? A year more and I shall be shelved, stuck in a pigeon-hole like a married man. I have all the discomforts of marriage and of single life, without the advantages of either; a false position, to which every man must come who remains tied too long to the same apron-string.'

'So you think you will come upon a treasure here?' said Bianchon. 'Your Marquise, my dear fellow, does not hit my fancy at all.'

'Your liberal opinions blur your eyesight. If Madame d'Espard were a Madame Rabourdin . . .'

'Listen to me. Noble or simple, she would still have no soul; she would still be a perfect type of selfishness. Take my word for it, medical men are accustomed to judge of people and things; the sharpest of us read the soul while we study the body. In spite of that pretty boudoir where we have spent this evening, in spite of the magnificence of the house, it is quite possible that Madame la Marquise is in debt.'

'What makes you think so?'

'I do not assert it; I am supposing. She talked of her soul as Louis XVIII. used to talk of his heart. I tell you this: That fragile, fair woman, with her chestnut hair, who pities herself that she may be pitied, enjoys an iron constitution, an appetite like a wolf's, and the strength and cowardice of a tiger. Gauze, and silk, and muslin were never more cleverly twisted round a lie! *Ecco.*'

'Bianchon, you frighten me! You have learned a good many things, then, since we lived in the Maison Vauquer?'

'Yes; since then, my boy, I have seen puppets, both dolls and mannikins. I know something of the ways of the fine ladies whose bodies we attend to, saving that which is dearest to them, their child—if they love it—or their

pretty faces, which they always worship. A man spends his nights by their pillow, wearing himself to death to spare them the slightest loss of beauty in any part; he succeeds, he keeps their secret like the dead; they send to ask for his bill, and think it horribly exorbitant. Who saved them? Nature. Far from recommending him, they speak ill of him, fearing lest he should become the physician of their best friends.

'My dear fellow, those women of whom you say, "They are angels!" I—I—have seen stripped of the little grimaces under which they hide their soul, as well as of the frippery under which they disguise their defects—without manners and without stays; they are not beautiful.

'We saw a great deal of mud, a great deal of dirt, under the waters of the world when we were aground for a time on the shoals of the Maison Vauquer.—What we saw there was nothing. Since I have gone into higher society, I have seen monsters dressed in satin, Michonneaus in white gloves, Poirets bedizened with orders, fine gentlemen doing more usurious business than old Gobseck! To the shame of mankind, when I have wanted to shake hands with Virtue, I have found her shivering in a loft, persecuted by calumny, half starving on an income or a salary of fifteen hundred francs a year, and regarded as crazy, or eccentric, or imbecile.

'In short, my dear boy, the Marquise is a woman of fashion, and I have a particular horror of that kind of woman. Do you want to know why? A woman who has a lofty soul, fine taste, gentle wit, a generously warm heart, and who lives a simple life, has not a chance of being the fashion. *Ergo:* A woman of fashion and a man in power are analogous; but there is this difference: the qualities by which a man raises himself above others ennoble him and are a glory to him; whereas the qualities by which a woman gains power for a day are hideous vices; she belies her nature to hide her character, and to

live the militant life of the world she must have iron strength under a frail appearance.

'I, as a physician, know that a sound stomach excludes a good heart. Your woman of fashion feels nothing; her rage for pleasure has its source in a longing to heat up her cold nature, a craving for excitement and enjoyment, like an old man who stands night after night by the footlights at the opera. As she has more brain than heart, she sacrifices genuine passion and true friends to her triumph, as a general sends his most devoted subalterns to the front in order to win a battle. The woman of fashion ceases to be a woman; she is neither mother, nor wife, nor lover. She is, medically speaking, sex in the brain. And your Marquise, too, has all the characteristics of her monstrosity, the beak of a bird of prey, the clear, cold eye, the gentle voice—she is as polished as the steel of a machine, she touches everything except the heart.'

'There is some truth in what you say, Bianchon.'

'Some truth?' replied Bianchon. 'It is all true. Do you suppose that I was not struck to the heart by the insulting politeness by which she made me measure the imaginary distance which her noble birth sets between us? That I did not feel the deepest pity for her cat-like civilities when I remembered what her object was? A year hence she will not write one word to do me the slightest service, and this evening she pelted me with smiles, believing that I can influence my uncle Popinot, on whom the success of her case——'

'Would you rather she should have played the fool with you, my dear fellow?—I accept your diatribe against women of fashion; but you are beside the mark. I should always prefer for a wife a Marquise d'Espard to the most devout and devoted creature on earth. Marry an angel! you would have to go and bury your happiness in the depths of the country! The wife of a politician is a governing machine, a contrivance that

makes compliments and curtseys. She is the most important and most faithful tool which an ambitious man can use ; a friend, in short, who may compromise herself without mischief, and whom he may belie without harmful results. Fancy Mahomet in Paris in the nineteenth century ! His wife would be a Rohan, a Duchesse de Chevreuse of the Fronde, as keen and as flattering as an Ambassadress, as wily as Figaro. Your loving wives lead nowhere ; a woman of the world leads to everything ; she is the diamond with which a man cuts every window when he has not the golden key which unlocks every door. Leave humdrum virtues to the humdrum, ambitious vices to the ambitious.

'Besides, my dear fellow, do you imagine that the love of a Duchesse de Langeais, or de Maufrigneuse, or of a Lady Dudley does not bestow immense pleasure? If only you knew how much value the cold, severe style of such women gives to the smallest evidence of their affection ! What a delight it is to see a periwinkle piercing through the snow ! A smile from below a fan contradicts the reserve of an assumed attitude, and is worth all the unbridled tenderness of your middle-class women with their mortgaged devotion ; for, in love, devotion is nearly akin to speculation.

'And, then, a woman of fashion, a Blamont-Chauvry, has her virtues too ! Her virtues are fortune, power, effect, a certain contempt of all that is beneath her——'

'Thank you !' said Bianchon.

'Old curmudgeon !' said Rastignac, laughing. 'Come —do not be common ; do like your friend Desplein ; be a Baron, a Knight of Saint-Michael ; become a peer of France, and marry your daughters to dukes.'

'I ! May the five hundred thousand devils——'

'Come, come ! Can you be superior only in medicine ? Really, you distress me . . .'

'I hate that sort of people ; I long for a revolution to deliver us from them for ever.'

'And so, my dear Robespierre of the lancet, you will not go to-morrow to your uncle Popinot?'

'Yes, I will,' said Bianchon; 'for you I would go to hell to fetch water . . .'

'My good friend, you really touch me. I have sworn that a commission shall sit on the Marquis. Why, here is even a long-saved tear to thank you.'

'But,' Bianchon went on, 'I do not promise to succeed as you wish with Jean-Jules Popinot. You do not know him. However, I will take him to see your Marquise the day after to-morrow; she may get round him if she can. I doubt it. If all the truffles, all the Duchesses, all the mistresses, and all the charmers in Paris were there in the full bloom of their beauty; if the King promised him the *pairie*, and the Almighty gave him the Order of Paradise with the revenues of Purgatory, not one of all these powers would induce him to transfer a single straw from one saucer of his scales into the other. He is a judge, as Death is Death.'

The two friends had reached the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines.

'Here you are at home,' said Bianchon, laughing, as he pointed to the ministerial residence. 'And here is my carriage,' he added, calling a hackney cab. 'And these—express our fortune.'

'You will be happy at the bottom of the sea, while I am still struggling with the tempests on the surface, till I sink and go to ask you for a corner in your grotto, old fellow!'

'Till Saturday,' replied Bianchon.

'Agreed,' said Rastignac. 'And you promise me Popinot?'

'I will do all my conscience will allow. Perhaps this appeal for a commission covers some little dramorama, to use a word of our good bad times.'

'Poor Bianchon! he will never be anything but a

good fellow,' said Rastignac to himself as the cab drove off.

'Rastignac has given me the most difficult negotiation in the world,' said Bianchon to himself, remembering, as he rose next morning, the delicate commission intrusted to him. 'However, I have never asked the smallest service from my uncle in Court, and have paid more than a thousand visits gratis for him. And, after all, we are not apt to mince matters between ourselves. He will say Yes or No, and there an end.'

After this little soliloquy the famous physician bent his steps, at seven in the morning, towards the Rue du Fouarre, where dwelt Monsieur Jean-Jules Popinot, judge of the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine. The Rue du Fouarre—an old word meaning straw—was in the thirteenth century the most important street in Paris. There stood the Schools of the University, where the voices of Abelard and of Gerson were heard in the world of learning. It is now one of the dirtiest streets of the Twelfth Arrondissement, the poorest quarter of Paris, that in which two-thirds of the population lack firing in winter, which leaves most brats at the gate of the Foundling Hospital, which sends most beggars to the poorhouse, most rag-pickers to the street corners, most decrepit old folks to bask against the walls on which the sun shines, most delinquents to the police courts.

Half-way down this street, which is always damp, and where the gutter carries to the Seine the blackened waters from some dye-works, there is an old house, restored no doubt under Francis I., and built of bricks held together by a few courses of masonry. That it is substantial seems proved by the shape of its front wall, not uncommonly seen in some parts of Paris. It bellies, so to speak, in a manner caused by the protuberance of its first floor, crushed under the weight of the second and third,

but upheld by the strong wall of the ground floor. At first sight it would seem as though the piers between the windows, though strengthened by the stone mullions, must give way; but the observer presently perceives that, as in the tower at Bologna, the old bricks and old time-eaten stones of this house persistently preserve their centre of gravity.

At every season of the year the solid piers of the ground floor have the yellow tone and the imperceptible sweating surface that moisture gives to stone. The passer-by feels chilled as he walks close to this wall, where worn corner-stones ineffectually shelter him from the wheels of vehicles. As is always the case in houses built before carriages were in use, the vault of the doorway forms a very low archway not unlike the barbican of a prison. To the right of this entrance there are three windows, protected outside by iron gratings of so close a pattern, that the curious cannot possibly see the use made of the dark, damp rooms within, and the panes too are dirty and dusty; to the left are two similar windows, one of which is sometimes open, exposing to view the porter, his wife, and his children; swarming, working, cooking, eating, and screaming, in a floored and wainscoted room where everything is dropping to pieces, and into which you descend two steps—a depth which seems to suggest the gradual elevation of the soil of Paris.

If on a rainy day some foot-passenger takes refuge under the long vault, with projecting lime-washed beams, which leads from the door to the staircase, he will hardly fail to pause and look at the picture presented by the interior of this house. To the left is a square garden-plot, allowing of not more than four long steps in each direction, a garden of black soil, with trellises bereft of vines, and where, in default of vegetation under the shade of two trees, papers collect, old rags, potsherds, bits of mortar fallen from the roof; a barren ground, where time has shed on the walls, and on the trunks and branches of

the trees, a powdery deposit like cold soot. The two parts of the house, set at a right angle, derive light from this garden-court shut in by two adjoining houses built on wooden piers, decrepit and ready to fall, where on each floor some grotesque evidence is to be seen of the craft pursued by the lodger within. Here long poles are hung with immense skeins of dyed worsted put out to dry; there, on ropes, dance clean-washed shirts; higher up, on a shelf, volumes display their freshly marbled edges; women sing, husbands whistle, children shout; the carpenter saws his planks, a copper-turner makes the metal screech; all kinds of industries combine to produce a noise which the number of instruments renders distracting.

The general system of decoration in this passage, which is neither courtyard, garden, nor vaulted way, though a little of all, consists of wooden pillars resting on square stone blocks, and forming arches. Two archways open on to the little garden; two others, facing the front gateway, lead to a wooden staircase, with an iron balustrade that was once a miracle of smith's work, so whimsical are the shapes given to the metal; the worn steps creak under every tread. The entrance to each flat has an architrave dark with dirt, grease, and dust, and outer doors, covered with Utrecht velvet set with brass nails, once gilt, in a diamond pattern. These relics of splendour show that in the time of Louis XIV. the house was the residence of some Councillor to the Parlement, some rich priests, or some treasurer of the ecclesiastical revenue. But these vestiges of former luxury bring a smile to the lips by the artless contrast of past and present.

M. Jean-Jules Popinot lived on the first floor of this house, where the gloom, natural to all first floors in Paris houses, was increased by the narrowness of the street. This old tenement was known to all the twelfth *arrondissement*, on which Providence had bestowed this lawyer, as it gives a beneficent plant to cure or alleviate

every malady. Here is a sketch of the man whom the brilliant Marquise d'Espard hoped to fascinate.

M. Popinot, as is seemly for a magistrate, was always dressed in black—a style which contributed to make him ridiculous in the eyes of those who were in the habit of judging everything from a superficial examination. Men who are jealous of maintaining the dignity required by this colour ought to devote themselves to constant and minute care of their person; but our dear M. Popinot was incapable of forcing himself to the puritanical cleanliness which black demands. His trousers, always threadbare, looked like camlet—the stuff of which attorneys' gowns are made; and his habitual stoop set them, in time, in such innumerable creases, that in places they were traced with lines, whitish, rusty, or shiny, betraying either sordid avarice, or the most unheeding poverty. His coarse worsted stockings were twisted anyhow in his ill-shaped shoes. His linen had the tawny tinge acquired by long sojourn in a wardrobe, showing that the late lamented Madame Popinot had had a mania for much linen; in the Flemish fashion, perhaps, she had given herself the trouble of a great wash no more than twice a year. The old man's coat and waistcoat were in harmony with his trousers, shoes, stockings, and linen. He always had the luck of his carelessness; for, the first day he put on a new coat, he unfailingly matched it with the rest of his costume by staining it with incredible promptitude. The good man waited till his housekeeper told him that his hat was too shabby before buying a new one. His necktie was always crumpled and starchless, and he never set his dog's-eared shirt collar straight after his judge's bands had disordered it. He took no care of his grey hair, and shaved but twice a week. He never wore gloves, and generally kept his hands stuffed into his empty trousers' pockets; the soiled pocket-holes, almost always torn, added a final touch to the slovenliness of his person.

Any one who knows the Palais de Justice at Paris, where every variety of black attire may be studied, can easily imagine the appearance of M. Popinot. The habit of sitting for days at a time modifies the structure of the body, just as the fatigue of hearing interminable pleadings tells on the expression of a magistrate's face. Shut up as he is in courts ridiculously small, devoid of architectural dignity, and where the air is quickly vitiated, a Paris judge inevitably acquires a countenance puckered and seamed by reflection, and depressed by weariness; his complexion turns pallid, acquiring an earthy or greenish hue according to his individual temperament. In short, within a given time the most blooming young man is turned into an 'inasmuch' machine—an instrument which applies the Code to individual cases with the indifference of clock-work.

Hence, nature having bestowed on M. Popinot a not too pleasing exterior, his life as a lawyer had not improved it. His frame was graceless and angular. His thick knees, huge feet, and broad hands formed a contrast with a priest-like face having a vague resemblance to a calf's head, meek to unmeaningness, and but little brightened by divergent, bloodless eyes, divided by a straight flat nose, surmounted by a flat forehead, flanked by enormous ears, flabby and graceless. His thin, weak hair showed the baldness through various irregular partings.

One feature only commended this face to the physiognomist. This man had a mouth to whose lips divine kindness lent its sweetness. They were wholesome, full, red lips, finely wrinkled, sinuous, mobile, by which nature had given expression to noble feeling; lips which spoke to the heart and proclaimed the man's intelligence and lucidity, a gift of second sight, and a heavenly temper; and you would have judged him wrongly from looking merely at his sloping forehead, his fireless eyes, and his shambling gait. His life answered to his countenance; it was full of

secret labour, and hid the virtue of a saint. His superior knowledge of law proved so strong a recommendation at the time when Napoleon was reorganising it in 1808 and 1811, that, by the advice of Cambacérès, he was one of the first men named to sit on the Imperial High Court of Justice at Paris. Popinot was no schemer. Whenever any demand was made, any request preferred for an appointment, the Minister would overlook Popinot, who never set foot in the house of the High Chancellor or the Chief Justice. From the High Court he was sent down to the Common Court, and pushed to the lowest rung of the ladder by active struggling men. There he was appointed supernumerary judge. There was a general outcry among the lawyers: 'Popinot a supernumerary!' Such injustice struck the legal world with dismay — the attorneys, the registrars, everybody but Popinot himself, who made no complaint. The first clamour over, everybody was satisfied that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, which must certainly be the legal world. Popinot remained supernumerary judge till the day when the most famous Great Seal under the Restoration avenged the oversights heaped on this modest and uncomplaining man by the Chief Justices of the Empire. After being a supernumerary for twelve years, M. Popinot would no doubt die a puisne judge of the Court of the Seine.

To account for the obscure fortunes of one of the superior men of the legal profession, it is necessary to enter here into some details which will serve to reveal his life and character, and which will, at the same time, display some of the wheels of the great machine known as Justice. M. Popinot was classed by the three Presidents who successively controlled the Court of the Seine under the category of possible judges, the stuff of which judges are made. Thus classified, he did not achieve the reputation for capacity which his previous labours had deserved. Just as a painter is invariably

included in a category as a landscape painter, a portrait painter, a painter of history, of sea pieces, or of genre, by a public consisting of artists, connoisseurs, and simpletons, who, out of envy, or critical omnipotence, or prejudice, fence in his intellect, assuming, one and all, that there are ganglions in every brain—a narrow judgment which the world applies to writers, to statesmen, to everybody who begins with some specialty before being hailed as omniscient; so Popinot's fate was sealed, and he was hedged round to do a particular kind of work. Magistrates, attorneys, pleaders, all who pasture on the legal common, distinguish two elements in every case—law and equity. Equity is the outcome of facts, law is the application of principles to facts. A man may be right in equity but wrong in law, without any blame to the judge. Between his conscience and the facts there is a whole gulf of determining reasons unknown to the judge, but which condemn or legitimise the act. A judge is not God; his duty is to adapt facts to principles, to judge cases of infinite variety while measuring them by a fixed standard.

France employs about six thousand judges; no generation has six thousand great men at her command, much less can she find them in the legal profession. Popinot, in the midst of the civilisation of Paris, was just a very clever cadi, who, by the character of his mind, and by dint of rubbing the letter of the law into the essence of facts, had learned to see the error of spontaneous and violent decisions. By the help of his judicial second sight he could pierce the double casing of lies in which advocates hide the heart of a trial. He was a judge, as the great Desplein was a surgeon; he probed men's consciences as the anatomist probed their bodies. His life and habits had led him to an exact appreciation of their most secret thoughts by a thorough study of facts.

He sifted a case as Cuvier sifted the earth's crust.

Like that great thinker, he proceeded from deduction to deduction before drawing his conclusions, and reconstructed the past career of a conscience as Cuvier reconstructed an Anoplotherium. When considering a brief he would often wake in the night, startled by a gleam of truth suddenly sparkling in his brain. Struck by the deep injustice, which is the end of these contests, in which everything is against the honest man, everything to the advantage of the rogue, he often summed up in favour of equity against law in such cases as bore on questions of what may be termed divination. Hence he was regarded by his colleagues as a man not of a practical mind; his arguments on two lines of deduction made their deliberations lengthy. When Popinot observed their dislike to listening to him he gave his opinion briefly; it was said that he was not a good judge in this class of cases; but as his gift of discrimination was remarkable, his opinion lucid, and his penetration profound, he was considered to have a special aptitude for the laborious duties of an examining judge. So an examining judge he remained during the greater part of his legal career.

Although his qualifications made him eminently fitted for its difficult functions, and he had the reputation of being so learned in criminal law that his duty was a pleasure to him, the kindness of his heart constantly kept him in torture, and he was nipped as in a vice between his conscience and his pity. The services of an examining judge are better paid than those of a judge in civil actions, but they do not therefore prove a temptation; they are too onerous. Popinot, a man of modest and virtuous learning, without ambition, an indefatigable worker, never complained of his fate; he sacrificed his tastes and his compassionate soul to the public good, and allowed himself to be transported to the noisome pools of criminal examinations, where he showed himself alike severe and beneficent. His clerk sometimes would give the

accused some money to buy tobacco, or a warm winter garment, as he led him back from the judge's office to the *Souricière*, the mouse-trap—the House of Detention where the accused are kept under the orders of the Examining Judge. He knew how to be an inflexible judge and a charitable man. And no one extracted a confession so easily as he without having recourse to judicial trickery. He had, too, all the acumen of an observer. This man, apparently so foolishly good-natured, simple, and absent-minded, could guess all the cunning of a prison wag, unmask the astutest street hussy, and subdue a scoundrel. Unusual circumstances had sharpened his perspicacity; but to relate these we must intrude on his domestic history, for in him the judge was the social side of the man; another man, greater and less known, existed within.

Twelve years before the beginning of this story, in 1816, during the terrible scarcity which coincided disastrously with the stay in France of the so-called Allies, Popinot was appointed President of the Commission Extraordinary formed to distribute food to the poor of his neighbourhood, just when he had planned to move from the Rue du Fouarre, which he as little liked to live in as his wife did. The great lawyer, the clear-sighted criminal judge, whose superiority seemed to his colleagues a form of aberration, had for five years been watching legal results without seeing their causes. As he scrambled up into lofts, as he saw the poverty, as he studied the desperate necessities which gradually bring the poor to criminal acts, as he estimated their long struggles, compassion filled his soul. The judge then became the Saint Vincent de Paul of these grown-up children, these suffering toilers. The transformation was not immediately complete. Beneficence has its temptations as vice has. Charity consumes a saint's purse, as roulette consumes the possessions of a gambler, quite gradually. Popinot went from misery to misery, from charity to

charity; then, by the time he had lifted all the rags which cover public pauperism, like a bandage under which an inflamed wound lies festering, at the end of a year he had become the Providence incarnate of that quarter of the town. He was a member of the Benevolent Committee and of the Charity Organisation. Wherever any gratuitous services were needed he was ready, and did everything without fuss, like the *man with the short cloak*, who spends his life in carrying soup round the markets and other places where there are starving folks.

Popinot was fortunate in acting on a larger circle and in a higher sphere; he had an eye on everything, he prevented crime, he gave work to the unemployed, he found a refuge for the helpless, he distributed aid with discernment wherever danger threatened, he made himself the counsellor of the widow, the protector of homeless children, the sleeping partner of small traders. No one at the Courts, no one in Paris, knew of this secret life of Popinot's. There are virtues so splendid that they necessitate obscurity; men make haste to hide them under a bushel. As to those whom the lawyer succoured, they, hard at work all day and tired at night, were little able to sing his praises; theirs was the gracelessness of children, who can never pay because they owe too much. There is such compulsory ingratitude; but what heart that has sown good to reap gratitude can think itself great?

By the end of the second year of his apostolic work, Popinot had turned the storeroom at the bottom of his house into a parlour, lighted by the three iron-barred windows. The walls and ceiling of this spacious room were white-washed, and the furniture consisted of wooden benches like those seen in schools, a clumsy cupboard, a walnut-wood writing-table, and an armchair. In the cupboard were his registers of donations, his tickets for orders for bread, and his diary. He kept his ledger like a tradesman, that he might not be ruined by kindness.

All the sorrows of the neighbourhood were entered and numbered in a book, where each had its little account, as merchants' customers have theirs. When there was any question as to a man or a family needing help, the lawyer could always command information from the police.

Lavienne, a man made for his master, was his aide-de-camp. He redeemed or renewed pawn-tickets, and visited the districts most threatened with famine, while his master was in court.

From four till seven in the morning in summer, from six till nine in winter, this room was full of women, children, and paupers, while Popinot gave audience. There was no need for a stove in winter; the crowd was so dense that the air was warmed; only Lavienne strewed straw on the wet floor. By long use the benches were as polished as varnished mahogany; at the height of a man's shoulders the wall had a coat of dark, indescribable colour, given to it by the rags and tattered clothes of these poor creatures. The poor wretches loved Popinot so well that when they assembled before his door was opened, before daybreak on a winter's morning, the women warming themselves with their foot-brasiers, the men swinging their arms for circulation, never a sound had disturbed his sleep. Rag-pickers and other toilers of the night knew the house, and often saw a light burning in the lawyer's private room at unholy hours. Even thieves, as they passed by, said, 'That is his house,' and respected it. The morning he gave to the poor, the mid-day hours to criminals, the evening to law work.

Thus the gift of observation that characterised Popinot was necessarily *bifrons*; he could guess the virtues of a pauper—good feelings nipped, fine actions in embryo, unrecognised self-sacrifice, just as he could read at the bottom of a man's conscience the faintest outlines of a crime, the slenderest threads of wrongdoing, and infer all the rest.

Popinot's inherited fortune was a thousand crowns a year. His wife, sister to M. Bianchon *senior*, a doctor at Sancerre, had brought him about twice as much. She, dying five years since, had left her fortune to her husband. As the salary of a supernumerary judge is not large, and Popinot had been a fully salaried judge only for four years, we may guess his reasons for parsimony in all that concerned his person and mode of life, when we consider how small his means were and how great his beneficence. Besides, is not such indifference to dress as stamped Popinot an absent-minded man, a distinguishing mark of scientific attainment, of art passionately pursued, of a perpetually active mind? To complete this portrait, it will be enough to add that Popinot was one of the few judges of the Court of the Seine on whom the ribbon of the Legion of Honour had not been conferred.

Such was the man who had been instructed by the President of the Second Chamber of the Court—to which Popinot had belonged since his reinstatement among the judges in civil law—to examine the Marquis d'Espard at the request of his wife, who sued for a Commission in Lunacy.

The Rue du Fouarre, where so many unhappy wretches swarmed in the early morning, would be deserted by nine o'clock, and as gloomy and squalid as ever. Bianchon put his horse to a trot in order to find his uncle in the midst of his business. It was not without a smile that he thought of the curious contrast the judge's appearance would make in Madame d'Espard's room; but he promised himself that he would persuade him to dress in a way that should not be too ridiculous.

'If only my uncle happens to have a new coat!' said Bianchon to himself, as he turned into the Rue du Fouarre, where a pale light shone from the parlour windows. 'I shall do well, I believe, to talk that over with Lavienne.'

At the sound of wheels half a score of startled paupers

came out from under the gateway, and took off their hats on recognising Bianchon; for the doctor, who treated gratuitously the sick recommended to him by the lawyer, was not less well known than he to the poor creatures assembled there.

Bianchon found his uncle in the middle of the parlour, where the benches were occupied by patients presenting such grotesque singularities of costume as would have made the least artistic passer-by turn round to gaze at them. A draughtsman—a Rembrandt, if there were one in our day—might have conceived of one of his finest compositions from seeing these children of misery, in artless attitudes, and all silent.

Here was the rugged countenance of an old man with a white beard and an apostolic head—a Saint Peter ready to hand; his chest, partly uncovered, showed salient muscles, the evidence of an iron constitution which had served him as a fulcrum to resist a whole poem of sorrows. There a young woman was suckling her youngest-born to keep it from crying, while another of about five stood between her knees. Her white bosom, gleaming amid rags, the baby with its transparent flesh-tints, and the brother, whose attitude promised a street arab in the future, touched the fancy with pathos by its almost graceful contrast with the long row of faces crimson with cold, in the midst of which sat this family group. Further away, an old woman, pale and rigid, had the repulsive look of rebellious pauperism, eager to avenge all its past woes in one day of violence.

There, again, was the young workman, weakly and indolent, whose brightly intelligent eye revealed fine faculties crushed by necessity struggled with in vain, saying nothing of his sufferings, and nearly dead for lack of an opportunity to squeeze between the bars of the vast stews where the wretched swim round and round and devour each other.

The majority were women; their husbands, gone to

their work, left it to them, no doubt, to plead the cause of the family with the ingenuity which characterises the woman of the people, who is almost always queen in her hovel. You would have seen a torn bandana on every head, on every form a skirt deep in mud, ragged kerchiefs, worn and dirty jackets, but eyes that burnt like live coals. It was a horrible assemblage, raising at first sight a feeling of disgust, but giving a certain sense of terror the instant you perceived that the resignation of these souls, all engaged in the struggle for every necessary of life, was purely fortuitous, a speculation on benevolence. The two tallow candles which lighted the parlour flickered in a sort of fog caused by the fetid atmosphere of the ill-ventilated room.

The magistrate himself was not the least picturesque figure in the midst of this assembly. He had on his head a rusty cotton night-cap; as he had no cravat, his neck was visible, red with cold and wrinkled, in contrast with the threadbare collar of his old dressing-gown. His worn face had the half-stupid look that comes of absorbed attention. His lips, like those of all men who work, were puckered up like a bag with the strings drawn tight. His knitted brows seemed to bear the burden of all the sorrows confided to him: he felt, analysed, and judged them all. As watchful as a Jew money-lender, he never raised his eyes from his books and registers but to look into the very heart of the persons he was examining, with the flashing glance by which a miser expresses his alarm.

Lavienne, standing behind his master, ready to carry out his orders, served no doubt as a sort of police, and welcomed new-comers by encouraging them to get over their shyness. When the doctor appeared there was a stir on the benches. Lavienne turned his head, and was strangely surprised to see Bianchon.

'Ah! It is you, old boy!' exclaimed Popinot, stretching himself. 'What brings you so early?'

'I was afraid lest you should make an official visit about which I wish to speak to you before I could see you.'

'Well,' said the lawyer, addressing a stout little woman who was still standing close to him, 'if you do not tell me what it is you want, I cannot guess it, child.'

'Make haste,' said Lavienne. 'Do not waste other people's time.'

'Monsieur,' said the woman at last, turning red, and speaking so low as only to be heard by Popinot and Lavienne, 'I have a green-grocery truck, and I have my last baby out at nurse, and I owe for his keep. Well, I had hidden my little bit of money——'

'Yes; and your man took it?' said Popinot, guessing the sequel.

'Yes, sir.'

'What is your name?'

'La Pomponne.'

'And your husband's?'

'Toupinet.'

'Rue du Petit-Banquier?' said Popinot, turning over his register. 'He is in prison,' he added, reading a note at the margin of the section in which this family was described.

'For debt, my kind Monsieur.'

Popinot shook his head.

'But I have nothing to buy any stock for my truck; the landlord came yesterday and made me pay up; otherwise I should have been turned out.'

Lavienne bent over his master, and whispered in his ear.

'Well, how much do you want to buy fruit in the market?'

'Why, my good Monsieur, to carry on my business, I should want—Yes, I should certainly want ten francs.'

Popinot signed to Lavienne, who took ten francs out of a large bag, and handed them to the woman, while

the lawyer made a note of the loan in his ledger. As he saw the thrill of delight that made the poor hawker tremble, Bianchon understood the apprehensions that must have agitated her on her way to the lawyer's house.

'You next,' said Lavienne to the old man with the white beard.

Bianchon drew the servant aside, and asked him how long this audience would last.

'Monsieur has had two hundred persons this morning, and there are eighty to be turned off,' said Lavienne. 'You will have time to pay your early visit, sir.'

'Here, my boy,' said the lawyer, turning round and taking Horace by the arm; 'here are two addresses near this—one in the Rue de Seine, and the other in the Rue de l'Arbalète. Go there at once. Rue de Seine, a young girl has just asphyxiated herself; and Rue de l'Arbalète, you will find a man to remove to your hospital. I will wait breakfast for you.'

Bianchon returned an hour later. The Rue du Fouarre was deserted; day was beginning to dawn there; his uncle had gone up to his rooms; the last poor wretch whose misery the judge had relieved was departing, and Lavienne's money bag was empty.

'Well, how are they going on?' asked the old lawyer, as the doctor came in.

'The man is dead,' replied Bianchon; 'the girl will get over it.'

Since the eye and hand of a woman had been lacking, the flat in which Popinot lived had assumed an aspect in harmony with its master's. The indifference of a man who is absorbed in one dominant idea had set its stamp of eccentricity on everything. Everywhere lay unconquerable dust, every object was adapted to a wrong purpose with a pertinacity suggestive of a bachelor's home. There were papers in the flower vases, empty ink-bottles on the tables, plates that had been forgotten, matches used as tapers for a minute when something had

to be found, drawers or boxes half turned out and left unfinished; in short, all the confusion and vacancies resulting from plans for order never carried out. The lawyer's private room, especially disordered by this incessant rummage, bore witness to his unresting pace, the hurry of a man overwhelmed with business, hunted by contradictory necessities. The bookcase looked as if it had been sacked; there were books scattered over everything, some piled up open, one on another, others on the floor face downwards; registers of proceedings laid on the floor in rows, lengthwise, in front of the shelves; and that floor had not been polished for two years.

The tables and shelves were covered with *ex votos*, the offerings of the grateful poor. On a pair of blue glass jars which ornamented the chimney-shelf there were two glass balls, of which the core was made up of many coloured fragments, giving them the appearance of some singular natural product. Against the wall hung frames of artificial flowers, and decorations in which Popinot's initials were surrounded by hearts and everlasting flowers. Here were boxes of elaborate and useless cabinet work; there letter-weights carved in the style of work done by convicts in penal servitude. These masterpieces of patience, enigmas of gratitude, and withered bouquets gave the lawyer's room the appearance of a toyshop. The good man used these works of art as hiding-places which he filled with bills, worn-out pens, and scraps of paper. All these pathetic witnesses to his divine charity were thick with dust, dingy, and faded.

Some birds, beautifully stuffed, but eaten by moth, perched in this wilderness of trumpery, presided over by an Angora cat, Madame Popinot's pet, restored to her no doubt with all the graces of life by some impecunious naturalist, who thus repaid a gift of charity with a perennial treasure. Some local artist whose heart had misguided his brush had painted portraits of M. and Madame Popinot. Even in the bedroom there were

embroidered pin-cushions, landscapes in cross-stitch, and crosses in folded paper, so elaborately cockled as to show the senseless labour they had cost.

The window-curtains were black with smoke, and the hangings absolutely colourless. Between the fire-place and the large square table at which the magistrate worked, the cook had set two cups of coffee on a small table, and two arm-chairs, in mahogany and horsehair, awaited the uncle and nephew. As daylight, darkened by the windows, could not penetrate to this corner, the cook had left two dips burning, whose unsnuffed wicks showed a sort of mushroom growth, giving the red light which promises length of life to the candle from slowness of combustion—a discovery due to some miser.

'My dear uncle, you ought to wrap yourself more warmly when you go down to that parlour.'

'I cannot bear to keep them waiting, poor souls!—Well, and what do you want of me?'

'I have come to ask you to dine to-morrow with the Marquise d'Espard.'

'A relation of ours?' asked Popinot, with such genuine absence of mind that Bianchon laughed.

'No, uncle; the Marquise d'Espard is a high and puissant lady, who has laid before the Courts a petition desiring that a Commission in Lunacy should sit on her husband, and you are appointed——'

'And you want me to dine with her! Are you mad?' said the lawyer, taking up the code of proceedings. 'Here, only read this article, prohibiting any magistrate's eating or drinking in the house of either of two parties whom he is called upon to decide between. Let her come and see me, your Marquise, if she has anything to say to me. I was in fact to go to examine her husband to-morrow, after working the case up to-night.'

He rose, took up a packet of papers that lay under a weight where he could see it, and after reading the title, he said—

'Here is the affidavit. Since you take an interest in this high and puissant lady, let us see what she wants.'

Popinot wrapped his dressing-gown across his body, from which it was constantly slipping and leaving his chest bare; he sopped his bread in the half-cold coffee, and opened the petition, which he read, allowing himself to throw in a parenthesis now and then, and some discussions, in which his nephew took part:—

'"To Monsieur the President of the Civil Tribunal of the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine, sitting at the Palais de Justice.

'"Madame Jeanne Clémentine Athénaïs de Blamont-Chauvry, wife of M. Charles Maurice Marie Andoche, Comte de Nègrepelisse, Marquis d'Espard"—a very good family—"landowner, the said Mme. d'Espard living in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, No. 104, and the said M. d'Espard in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, No. 22."—to be sure, the President told me he lived in this part of the town—"having for her solicitor Maître Desroches"—Desroches! a pettifogging jobber, a man looked down upon by his brother lawyers, and who does his clients no good——'

'Poor fellow!' said Bianchon, 'unluckily he has no money, and he rushes round like the devil in holy water—That is all.'

'"Has the honour to submit to you, Monsieur the President, that for a year past the moral and intellectual powers of her husband, M. d'Espard, have undergone so serious a change, that at the present day they have reached the state of dementia and idiotcy provided for by Article 448 of the Civil Code, and require the application of the remedies set forth by that article, for the security of his fortune and his person, and to guard the interest of his children whom he keeps to live with him.

'"That, in point of fact, the mental condition of M. d'Espard, which for some years has given grounds for

alarm based on the system he has pursued in the management of his affairs, has reached, during the last twelvemonth, a deplorable depth of depression; that his infirm will was the first thing to show the results of the malady; and that its effete state leaves M. the Marquis d'Espard exposed to all the perils of his incompetency, as is proved by the following facts:—

'"For a long time all the income accruing from M. d'Espard's estates are paid, without any reasonable cause, or even temporary advantage, into the hands of an old woman, whose repulsive ugliness is generally remarked on, named Madame Jeanrenaud, living sometimes in Paris, Rue de la Vrillière, No. 8, sometimes at Villeparisis, near Claye, in the Department of Seine et Marne, and for the benefit of her son, aged thirty-six, an officer in the ex-Imperial Guards, whom the Marquis d'Espard has placed by his influence in the King's Guards, as Major in the First Regiment of Cuirassiers. These two persons, who in 1814 were in extreme poverty, have since then purchased house-property of considerable value; among other items, quite recently, a large house in the Grande Rue Verte, where the said Jeanrenaud is laying out considerable sums in order to settle there with the woman Jeanrenaud, intending to marry; these sums amount already to more than a hundred thousand francs. The marriage has been arranged by the intervention of M. d'Espard with his banker, one Mongenod, whose niece he has asked in marriage for the said Jeanrenaud, promising to use his influence to procure him the title and dignity of Baron. This has in fact been secured by his Majesty's letters patent, dated December 29th of last year, at the request of the Marquis d'Espard, as can be proved by his Excellency the Keeper of the Seals, if the Court should think proper to require his testimony.

'"That no reason, not even such as morality and the law would concur in disapproving, can justify the influence

which the said Mme. Jeanrenaud exerts over M. d'Espard, who, indeed, sees her very seldom; nor account for his strange affection for the said Baron Jeanrenaud, Major, with whom he has but little intercourse. And yet their power is so considerable, that whenever they need money, if only to gratify a mere whim, this lady or her son——" Heh, heh! *no reason even such as morality and the law concur in disapproving!* What does the clerk or the attorney mean to insinuate?' said Popinot.

Bianchon laughed.

'"This lady, or her son, obtain whatever they ask of the Marquis d'Espard without demur; and if he has not ready money, M. d'Espard draws bills to be paid by the said Mongenod, who has offered to give evidence to that effect for the petitioner.

'"That, moreover, in further proof of these facts, lately, on the occasion of the renewal of the leases on the Espard estate, the farmers having paid a considerable premium for the renewal of their leases on the old terms, M. Jeanrenaud at once secured the payment of it into his own hands.

'"That the Marquis d'Espard parts with these sums of money so little of his own free-will, that when he was spoken to on the subject he seemed to remember nothing of the matter; that whenever anybody of any weight has questioned him as to his devotion to these two persons, his replies have shown so complete an absence of ideas and of sense of his own interests, that there obviously must be some occult cause at work to which the petitioner begs to direct the eye of justice, inasmuch as it is impossible but that this cause should be criminal, malignant, and wrongful, or else of a nature to come under medical jurisdiction; unless this influence is of the kind which constitutes an abuse of moral power—such as can only be described by the word *possession*——" The devil!' exclaimed Popinot. 'What do you say to that, doctor? These are strange statements.'

'They might certainly,' said Bianchon, 'be an effect of magnetic force.'

'Then do you believe in Mesmer's nonsense, and his tub, and seeing through walls?'

'Yes, uncle,' said the doctor gravely. 'As I heard you read that petition I thought of that. I assure you that I have verified, in another sphere of action, several analogous facts proving the unlimited influence one man may acquire over another. In contradiction to the opinion of my brethren, I am perfectly convinced of the power of the will regarded as a motor force. All collusion and charlatanism apart, I have seen the results of such a possession. Actions promised during sleep by a magnetised patient to the magnetiser have been scrupulously performed on waking. The will of one had become the will of the other.'

'Every kind of action?'

'Yes.'

'Even a criminal act?'

'Even a crime.'

'If it were not from you, I would not listen to such a thing.'

'I will make you witness it,' said Bianchon.

'Hm, hm,' muttered the lawyer. 'But supposing that this so-called possession fell under this class of facts, it would be difficult to prove it as legal evidence.'

'If this woman Jeanrenaud is so hideously old and ugly, I do not see what other means of fascination she can have used,' observed Bianchon.

'But,' observed the lawyer, 'in 1814, the time at which this fascination is supposed to have taken place, this woman was fourteen years younger; if she had been connected with M. d'Espard ten years before that, these calculations take us back four-and-twenty years, to a time when the lady may have been young and pretty, and have won for herself and her son a power over M. d'Espard which some men do not know how to evade.

Though the source of this power is reprehensible in the sight of justice, it is justifiable in the eye of nature. Madame Jeanrenaud may have been aggrieved by the marriage, contracted probably at about that time, between the Marquis d'Espard and Mademoiselle de Blamont-Chauvry, and at the bottom of all this there may be nothing more than the rivalry of two women, since the Marquis has for a long time lived apart from Mme. d'Espard.'

'But her repulsive ugliness, uncle.'

'Power of fascination is in direct proportion to ugliness,' said the lawyer; 'that is an old story. And then think of the smallpox, doctor. But to proceed.'

'"That so long ago as in 1815, in order to supply the sums of money required by these two persons, the Marquis d'Espard went with his two children to live in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, in rooms quite unworthy of his name and rank"—well, we may live as we please—"that he keeps his two children there, the Comte Clément d'Espard and Vicomte Camille d'Espard, in a style of living quite unsuited to their future prospects, their name and fortune; that he often wants money, to such a point, that not long since the landlord, one Mariast, put in an execution on the furniture in the rooms; that when this execution was carried out in his presence, the Marquis d'Espard helped the bailiff, whom he treated like a man of rank, paying him all the marks of attention and respect which he would have shown to a person of superior birth and dignity to himself."'

The uncle and nephew glanced at each other and laughed.

'"That, moreover, every act of his life, besides the facts with reference to the widow Jeanrenaud and the Baron Jeanrenaud, her son, are those of a madman; that for nearly ten years he has given his thoughts exclusively to China, its customs, manners, and history; that he refers

everything to a Chinese origin; that when he is questioned on the subject, he confuses the events of the day and the business of yesterday with facts relating to China; that he censures the acts of the Government and the conduct of the King, though he is personally much attached to him, by comparing them with the politics of China;

'"That this monomania has driven the Marquis d'Espard to conduct devoid of all sense: against the customs of men of rank, and, in opposition to his own professed ideas as to the duties of the nobility, he has joined a commercial undertaking, for which he constantly draws bills which, as they fall due, threaten both his honour and his fortune, since they stamp him as a trader, and in default of payment may lead to his being declared insolvent; that these debts, which are owing to stationers, printers, lithographers, and print-colourists, who have supplied the materials for his publication, called *A Picturesque History of China*, now coming out in parts, are so heavy that these tradesmen have requested the petitioner to apply for a Commission in Lunacy with regard to the Marquis d'Espard in order to save their own credit."'

'The man is mad!' exclaimed Bianchon.

'You think so, do you?' said his uncle. 'If you listen to only one bell, you hear only one sound.'

'But it seems to me——' said Bianchon.

'But it seems to me,' said Popinot, 'that if any relation of mine wanted to get hold of the management of my affairs, and if, instead of being a humble lawyer, whose colleagues can, any day, verify what his condition is, I were a duke of the realm, an attorney with a little cunning, like Desroches, might bring just such a petition against me.'

'"That his children's education has been neglected for this monomania; and that he has taught them, against all the rules of education, the facts of Chinese history, which contradict the tenets of the Catholic Church. He also has them taught the Chinese dialects."'

'Here Desroches strikes me as funny,' said Bianchon.

'The petition is drawn up by his head clerk Godeschal, who, as you know, is not strong in Chinese,' said the lawyer.

'"That he often leaves his children destitute of the most necessary things; that the petitioner, notwithstanding her entreaties, can never see them; that the said Marquis d'Espard brings them to her only once a year; that, knowing the privations to which they are exposed, she makes vain efforts to give them the things most necessary for their existence, and which they require——" Oh! Madame la Marquise, this is preposterous. By proving too much you prove nothing.—My dear boy,' said the old man, laying the document on his knee, 'where is the mother who ever lacked heart and wit and yearning to such a degree as to fall below the inspirations suggested by her animal instinct? A mother is as cunning to get at her children as a girl can be in the conduct of a love intrigue. If your Marquise really wanted to give her children food and clothes, the Devil himself would not have hindered her, heh? That is rather too big a fable for an old lawyer to swallow!—To proceed.'

'"That at the age the said children have now attained it is necessary that steps should be taken to preserve them from the evil effects of such an education; that they should be provided for as beseems their rank, and that they should cease to have before their eyes the sad example of their father's conduct;

'"That there are proofs in support of these allegations which the Court can easily order to be produced. Many times has M. d'Espard spoken of the judge of the Twelfth Arrondissement as a mandarin of the third class; he often speaks of the professors of the Collège Henri IV. as 'men of letters'"—and that offends them! "In speaking of the simplest things, he says, 'They were not done so in China'; in the course of the most ordinary conversa-

tion he will sometimes allude to Madame Jeanrenaud, or sometimes to events which happened in the time of Louis XIV., and then sit plunged in the darkest melancholy; sometimes he fancies he is in China. Several of his neighbours, among others one Edmé Becker, medical student, and Jean Baptiste Frémiot, a professor, living under the same roof, are of opinion, after frequent intercourse with the Marquis d'Espard, that his monomania with regard to everything Chinese is the result of a scheme laid by the said Baron Jeanrenaud and the widow his mother to bring about the deadening of all the Marquis d'Espard's mental faculties, since the only service which Mme. Jeanrenaud appears to render M. d'Espard is to procure him everything that relates to the Chinese Empire;

'"Finally, that the petitioner is prepared to show to the Court that the moneys absorbed by the said Baron and Mme. Jeanrenaud between 1814 and 1828 amount to not less than one million francs.

'"In confirmation of the facts herein set forth, the petitioner can bring the evidence of persons who are in the habit of seeing the Marquis d'Espard, whose names and professions are subjoined, many of whom have urged her to demand a commission in lunacy to declare M. d'Espard incapable of managing his own affairs, as being the only way to preserve his fortune from the effects of his maladministration and his children from his fatal influence.

'"Taking all this into consideration, M. le Président, and the affidavits subjoined, the petitioner desires that it may please you, inasmuch as the foregoing facts sufficiently prove the insanity and incompetency of the Marquis d'Espard herein described with his titles and residence, to order that, to the end that he may be declared incompetent by law, this petition and the documents in evidence may be laid before the king's public prosecutor; and that you will charge one of the judges

of this Court to make his report to you on any day you may be pleased to name, and thereupon to pronounce judgment," etc.

'And here,' said Popinot, 'is the Président's order instructing me!—Well, what does the Marquise d'Espard want with me? I know everything. But I shall go to-morrow with my registrar to see M. le Marquis, for this does not seem at all clear to me.'

'Listen, my dear uncle, I have never asked the least little favour of you that had to do with your legal functions; well, I now beg you to show Madame d'Espard the kindness which her situation deserves. If she came here, you would listen to her?'

'Yes.'

'Well, then, go and listen to her in her own house. Madame d'Espard is a sickly, nervous, delicate woman, who would faint in your rat's hole of a place. Go in the evening, instead of accepting her dinner, since the law forbids your eating or drinking at your client's expense.'

'And does not the law forbid you from taking any legacy from your dead?' said Popinot, fancying that he saw a touch of irony on his nephew's lips.

'Come, uncle, if it were only to enable you to get at the truth of this business, grant my request. You will come as the examining judge, since matters do not seem to you very clear. Deuce take it! It is as necessary to cross-question the Marquise as it is to examine the Marquis.'

'You are right,' said the lawyer. 'It is quite possible that it is she who is mad. I will go.'

'I will call for you. Write down in your engagement book: "To-morrow evening at nine, Madame d'Espard."—Good!' said Bianchon, seeing his uncle make a note of the engagement.

Next evening at nine Bianchon mounted his uncle's dusty staircase, and found him at work on the statement

of some complicated judgment. The coat Lavienne had ordered of the tailor had not been sent, so Popinot put on his old stained coat, and was the Popinot unadorned whose appearance made those laugh who did not know the secrets of his private life. Bianchon, however, obtained permission to pull his cravat straight, and to button his coat, and he hid the stains by crossing the breast of it with the right side over the left, and so displaying the new front of the cloth. But in a minute the judge rucked the coat up over his chest by the way in which he stuffed his hands into his pockets, obeying an irresistible habit. Thus the coat, deeply wrinkled both in front and behind, made a sort of hump in the middle of the back, leaving a gap between the waistcoat and trousers through which his shirt showed. Bianchon, to his sorrow, only discovered this crowning absurdity at the moment when his uncle entered the Marquise's room.

A brief sketch of the person and the career of the lady in whose presence the doctor and the judge now found themselves is necessary for an understanding of her interview with Popinot.

Madame d'Espard had, for the last seven years, been very much the fashion in Paris, where Fashion can raise and drop by turns various personages who, now great and now small, that is to say, in view or forgotten, are at last quite intolerable—as discarded ministers are, and every kind of decayed sovereignty. These flatterers of the past, odious with their stale pretensions, know everything, speak ill of everything, and, like ruined profligates, are friends with all the world. Since her husband had separated from her in 1815, Madame d'Espard must have married in the beginning of 1812. Her children, therefore, were aged respectively fifteen and thirteen. By what luck was the mother of a family, about three-and-thirty years of age, still the fashion?

Though Fashion is capricious, and no one can foresee

who shall be her favourites, though she often exalts a banker's wife, or some woman of very doubtful elegance and beauty, it certainly seems supernatural when Fashion puts on constitutional airs and gives promotion for age. But in this case Fashion had done as the world did, and accepted Madame d'Espard as still young.

The Marquise, who was thirty-three by her register of birth, was twenty-two in a drawing-room in the evening. But by what care, what artifice! Elaborate curls shaded her temples. She condemned herself to live in twilight, affecting illness so as to sit under the protecting tones of light filtered through muslin. Like Diane de Poitiers, she used cold water in her bath, and, like her again, the Marquise slept on a horsehair mattress, with morocco-covered pillows to preserve her hair; she ate very little, only drank water, and observed monastic regularity in the smallest actions of her life.

This severe system has, it is said, been carried so far as to the use of ice instead of water, and nothing but cold food, by a famous Polish lady of our day who spends a life, now verging on a century old, after the fashion of a town belle. Fated to live as long as Marion Delorme, whom history has credited with surviving to be a hundred and thirty, the old vice-queen of Poland, at the age of nearly a hundred, has the heart and brain of youth, a charming face, an elegant shape; and in her conversation, sparkling with brilliancy like faggots in the fire, she can compare the men and books of our literature with the men and books of the eighteenth century. Living in Warsaw, she orders her caps of Herbault in Paris. She is a great lady with the amiability of a mere girl; she swims, she runs like a schoolboy, and can sink on to a sofa with the grace of a young coquette; she mocks at death, and laughs at life. After having astonished the Emperor Alexander, she can still amaze the Emperor Nicholas by the splendour of her entertainments. She can still bring tears to the eyes of a

youthful lover, for her age is whatever she pleases, and she has the exquisite self-devotion of a *grisette*. In short, she is herself a fairy tale, unless, indeed, she is a fairy.

Had Madame d'Espard known Madame Zayonseck? Did she mean to imitate her career? Be that as it may, the Marquise proved the merits of the treatment; her complexion was clear, her brow unwrinkled, her figure, like that of Henri II.'s lady-love, preserved the litheness, the freshness, the covered charms which bring a woman love and keep it alive. The simple precautions of this course, suggested by art and nature, and perhaps by experience, had met in her with a general system which confirmed the results. The Marquise was absolutely indifferent to everything that was not herself: men amused her, but no man had ever caused her those deep agitations which stir both natures to their depths, and wreck one on the other. She knew neither hatred nor love. When she was offended, she avenged herself coldly, quietly, at her leisure, waiting for the opportunity to gratify the ill-will she cherished against anybody who dwelt in her unfavourable remembrance. She made no fuss, she did not excite herself; she talked, because she knew that by two words a woman may cause the death of three men.

She had parted from M. d'Espard with the greatest satisfaction. Had he not taken with him two children who at present were troublesome, and in the future would stand in the way of her pretensions? Her most intimate friends, as much as her least persistent admirers, seeing about her none of Cornelia's jewels, who come and go, and unconsciously betray their mother's age, took her for quite a young woman. The two boys, about whom she seemed so anxious in her petition, were, like their father, as unknown in the world as the north-west passage is unknown to navigators. M. d'Espard was supposed to be an eccentric personage who had

deserted his wife without having the smallest cause for complaint against her.

Mistress of herself at two-and-twenty, and mistress of her fortune of twenty-six thousand francs a year, the Marquise hesitated long before deciding on a course of action and ordering her life. Though she benefited by the expenses her husband had incurred in his house, though she had all the furniture, the carriages, the horses, in short, all the details of a handsome establishment, she lived a retired life during the years 1816, 17, and 18, a time when families were recovering from the disasters resulting from political tempests. She belonged to one of the most important and illustrious families of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and her parents advised her to live with them as much as possible after the separation forced upon her by her husband's inexplicable caprice.

In 1820 the Marquise roused herself from her lethargy; she went to Court, appeared at parties, and entertained in her own house. From 1821 to 1827 she lived in great style, and made herself remarked for her taste and her dress; she had a day, an hour, for receiving visits, and ere long she had seated herself on the throne, occupied before her by Madame la Vicomtesse de Beauséant, the Duchesse de Langeais, and Madame Firmiani—who on her marriage with M. de Camps had resigned the sceptre in favour of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, from whom Madame d'Espard snatched it. The world knew nothing beyond this of the private life of the Marquise d'Espard. She seemed likely to shine for long on the Parisian horizon, like the sun near its setting, but which will never set.

The Marquise was on terms of great intimacy with a duchess as famous for her beauty as for her attachment to a prince just now in banishment, but accustomed to play a leading part in every prospective government. Madame d'Espard was also the friend of a foreign lady, with whom a famous and very wily Russian diplomate

was in the habit of discussing public affairs. And then an antiquated countess, who was accustomed to shuffle the cards for the great game of politics, had adopted her in a maternal fashion. Thus, to any man of high ambitions, Madame d'Espard was preparing a covert but very real influence to follow the public and frivolous ascendency she now owed to fashion. Her drawing-room was acquiring political individuality: 'What do they say at Madame d'Espard's?' 'Are they against the measure in Madame d'Espard's drawing-room?' were questions repeated by a sufficient number of simpletons to give the flock of the faithful who surrounded her the importance of a coterie. A few damaged politicians whose wounds she had bound up, and whom she flattered, pronounced her as capable in diplomacy as the wife of the Russian ambassador to London. The Marquise had indeed several times suggested to deputies or to peers words and ideas that had rung through Europe. She had often judged correctly of certain events on which her circle of friends dared not express an opinion. The principal persons about the Court came in the evening to play whist in her rooms.

Then she also had the qualities of her defects; she was thought to be—and she was—discreet. Her friendship seemed to be staunch; she worked for her protégés with a persistency which showed that she cared less for patronage than for increased influence. This conduct was based on her dominant passion: Vanity. Conquests and pleasure, which so many women love, to her seemed only means to an end; she aimed at living on every point of the largest circle that life can describe.

Among the men still young, and to whom the future belonged, who crowded her drawing-room on great occasions, were to be seen MM. de Marsay and de Ronquerolles, de Montriveau, de la Roche-Hugon, de Sérizy, Ferraud, Maxime de Trailles, de Listomère, the two Vandenesses, du Châtelet, and others. She would

frequently receive a man whose wife she would not admit, and her power was great enough to induce certain ambitious men to submit to these hard conditions, such as two famous royalist bankers, M. de Nucingen and Ferdinand du Tillet. She had so thoroughly studied the strength and the weakness of Paris life, that her conduct had never given any man the smallest advantage over her. An enormous price might have been set on a note or letter by which she might have compromised herself, without one being produced.

If an arid soul enabled her to play her part to the life, her person was no less available for it. She had a youthful figure. Her voice was, at will, soft and fresh, or clear and hard. She possessed in the highest degree the secret of that aristocratic pose by which a woman wipes out the past. The Marquise knew well the art of setting an immense space between herself and the sort of man who fancies he may be familiar after some chance advances. Her imposing gaze could deny everything. In her conversation fine and beautiful sentiments and noble resolutions flowed naturally, as it seemed, from a pure heart and soul; but in reality she was all self, and quite capable of blasting a man who was clumsy in his negotiations, at the very time when she was shamelessly making a compromise for the benefit of her own interest.

Rastignac, in trying to fasten on to this woman, had discerned her to be the cleverest of tools, but he had not yet used it; far from handling it, he was already finding himself crushed by it. This young *Condottiere* of the brain, condemned, like Napoleon, to give battle constantly, while knowing that a single defeat would prove the grave of his fortunes, had met a dangerous adversary in his protectress. For the first time in his turbulent life, he was playing a game with a partner worthy of him. He saw a place as Minister in the conquest of Madame d'Espard, so he was her tool till he could make her his—a perilous beginning.

The Hôtel d'Espard needed a large household, and the Marquise had a great number of servants. The grand receptions were held in the ground-floor rooms, but she lived on the first floor of the house. The perfect order of a fine staircase splendidly decorated, and rooms fitted in the dignified style which formerly prevailed at Versailles, spoke of an immense fortune. When the judge saw the carriage gates thrown open to admit his nephew's cab, he took in with a rapid glance the lodge, the porter, the courtyard, the stables, the arrangement of the house, the flowers that decorated the stairs, the perfect cleanliness of the banisters, walls, and carpets, and counted the footmen in livery who, as the bell rang, appeared on the landing. His eyes, which only yesterday in his parlour had sounded the dignity of misery under the muddy clothing of the poor, now studied with the same penetrating vision the furniture and splendour of the rooms he passed through, to pierce to the misery of grandeur.

'M. Popinot.—M. Bianchon.'

The two names were pronounced at the door of the boudoir where the Marquise was sitting, a pretty room recently refurnished, and looking out on the garden behind the house. At the moment Madame d'Espard was seated in one of the old *rococo* armchairs of which Madame had set the fashion. Rastignac was at her left hand on a low chair, in which he looked settled like an Italian lady's 'cousin.' A third person was standing by the corner of the chimney-piece. As the shrewd doctor had suspected, the Marquise was a woman of a parched and wiry constitution. But for her regimen her complexion must have taken the ruddy tone that is produced by constant heat; but she added to the effect of her acquired pallor by the strong colours of the stuffs she hung her rooms with, or in which she dressed. Reddish-brown, marone, bistre with a golden light in it, suited her to perfection. Her boudoir, copied from that of a

famous lady then at the height of fashion in London, was in tan-coloured velvet; but she had added various details of ornament which moderated the pompous splendour of this royal hue. Her hair was dressed like a girl's in bands ending in curls, which emphasised the rather long oval of her face; but an oval face is as majestic as a round one is ignoble. The mirrors, cut with facets to lengthen or flatten the face at will, amply prove the rule as applied to the physiognomy.

On seeing Popinot, who stood in the doorway craning his neck like a startled animal, with his left hand in his pocket, and the right hand holding a hat with a greasy lining, the Marquise gave Rastignac a look where lay a germ of mockery. The good man's rather foolish appearance was so completely in harmony with his grotesque figure and scared looks, that Rastignac, catching sight of Bianchon's dejected expression of humiliation through his uncle, could not help laughing, and turned away. The Marquise bowed a greeting, and made a great effort to rise from her seat, falling back again, not without grace, with an air of apologising for her incivility by affected weakness.

At this instant the person who was standing between the fireplace and the door bowed slightly, and pushed forward two chairs, which he offered by a gesture to the doctor and the judge; then, when they had seated themselves, he leaned against the wall again, crossing his arms.

A word as to this man. There is living now, in our day, a painter—Decamps—who possesses in the very highest degree the art of commanding your interest in everything he sets before your eyes, whether it be a stone or a man. In this respect his pencil is more skilful than his brush. He will sketch an empty room and leave a broom against the wall. If he chooses, you shall shudder; you shall believe that this broom has just been the instrument of crime, and is dripping with blood; it shall be the broom which the widow Bancal used to

clean out the room where Fualdès was murdered. Yes, the painter will touzle that broom like a man in a rage; he will make each hair of it stand on end as though it were on your own bristling scalp; he will make it the interpreter between the secret poem of his imagination and the poem that shall have its birth in yours. After terrifying you by the aspect of that broom, to-morrow he will draw another, and lying by it a cat, asleep, but mysterious in its sleep, shall tell you that this broom is that on which the wife of a German cobbler rides off to the Sabbath on the Brocken. Or it will be a quite harmless broom, on which he will hang the coat of a clerk in the Treasury. Decamps had in his brush what Paganini had in his bow—a magnetically communicative power.

Well, I should have to transfer to my style that striking genius, that marvellous knack of the pencil, to depict the upright, tall, lean man dressed in black, with black hair, who stood there without speaking a word. This gentleman had a face like a knife-blade, cold and harsh, with a colour like Seine water when it is muddy and strewn with fragments of charcoal from a sunken barge. He looked at the floor, listening and passing judgment. His attitude was terrifying. He stood there like the dreadful broom to which Decamps has given the power of revealing a crime. Now and then, in the course of conversation, the Marquise tried to get some tacit advice; but however eager her questioning, he was as grave and as rigid as the statue of the Commendatore.

The worthy Popinot, sitting on the edge of his chair in front of the fire, his hat between his knees, stared at the gilt chandeliers, the clock, and the curiosities with which the chimney-shelf was covered, the velvet and trimmings of the curtains, and all the costly and elegant nothings that a woman of fashion collects about her. He was roused from his homely meditations by Madame d'Espard, who addressed him in a piping tone—

'Monsieur, I owe you a million thanks——'

'A million thanks,' thought he to himself, 'that is too many; it does not mean one.'

'For the trouble you condescend——'

'Condescend!' thought he; 'she is laughing at me.'

'To take in coming to see an unhappy client, who is too ill to go out——'

Here the lawyer cut the Marquise short by giving her an inquisitorial look, examining the sanitary condition of the unhappy client.

'As sound as a bell,' said he to himself.

'Madame,' said he, assuming a respectful mien, 'you owe me nothing. Although my visit to you is not in strict accordance with the practice of the Court, we ought to spare no pains to discover the truth in cases of this kind. Our judgment is then guided less by the letter of the law than by the promptings of our conscience. Whether I seek the truth here or in my own consulting-room, so long as I find it, all will be well.'

While Popinot was speaking, Rastignac was shaking hands with Bianchon; the Marquise welcomed the doctor with a little bow full of gracious significance.

'Who is that?' asked Bianchon in a whisper of Rastignac, indicating the dark man.

'The Chevalier d'Espard, the Marquis's brother.'

'Your nephew told me,' said the Marquise to Popinot, 'how much you are occupied, and I know too that you are so good as to wish to conceal your kind actions, so as to release those whom you oblige from the burden of gratitude. The work in Court is most fatiguing, it would seem. Why have they not twice as many judges?'

'Ah, Madame, that would not be difficult; we should be none the worse if they had. But when that happens, fowls will cut their teeth!'

As he heard this speech, so entirely in character with the lawyer's appearance, the Chevalier measured him

from head to foot, out of one eye, as much as to say, 'We shall easily manage him!'

The Marquise looked at Rastignac, who bent over her. 'That is the sort of man,' murmured the dandy in her ear, 'who is trusted to pass judgments on the life and interests of private individuals.'

Like most men who have grown old in a business, Popinot readily let himself follow the habits he had acquired, more particularly habits of mind. His conversation was all of 'the shop.' He was fond of questioning those he talked to, forcing them to unexpected conclusions, making them tell more than they wished to reveal. Pozzo di Borgo, it is said, used to amuse himself by discovering other folks' secrets, and entangling them in his diplomatic snares, and thus, by invincible habit, showed how his mind was soaked in wiliness. As soon as Popinot had surveyed the ground, so to speak, on which he stood, he saw that it would be necessary to have recourse to the cleverest subtleties, the most elaborately wrapped up and disguised, which were in use in the Courts, to detect the truth.

Bianchon sat cold and stern, as a man who has made up his mind to endure torture without revealing his sufferings; but in his heart he wished that his uncle could only trample on this woman as we trample on a viper—a comparison suggested to him by the Marquise's long dress, by the curve of her attitude, her long neck, small head, and undulating movements.

'Well, Monsieur,' said Madame d'Espard, 'however great my dislike to be or seem selfish, I have been suffering too long not to wish that you may settle matters at once. Shall I soon get a favourable decision?'

'Madame, I will do my best to bring matters to a conclusion,' said Popinot, with an air of frank good-nature. 'Are you ignorant of the reason which made the separation necessary which now subsists between you and the Marquis d'Espard?'

'Yes, Monsieur,' she replied, evidently prepared with a story to tell. 'At the beginning of 1816 M. d'Espard, whose temper had completely changed within three months or so, proposed that we should go to live on one of his estates near Briançon, without any regard for my health, which that climate would have destroyed, or for my habits of life; I refused to go. My refusal gave rise to such unjustifiable reproaches on his part, that from that hour I had my suspicions as to the soundness of his mind. On the following day he left me, leaving me his house and the free use of my own income, and he went to live in the Rue de la Montagne-Saint-Geneviève, taking with him my two children——'

'One moment, Madame,' said the lawyer, interrupting her. 'What was that income?'

'Twenty-six thousand francs a year,' she replied parenthetically. 'I at once consulted old M. Bordin as to what I ought to do,' she went on; 'but it seems that there are so many difficulties in the way of depriving a father of the care of his children, that I was forced to resign myself to remaining alone at the age of twenty-two—an age at which many young women do very foolish things. You have read my petition, no doubt, Monsieur; you know the principal facts on which I rely to procure a Commission in Lunacy with regard to M. d'Espard?'

'Have you ever applied to him, Madame, to obtain the care of your children?'

'Yes, Monsieur; but in vain. It is very hard on a mother to be deprived of the affection of her children, particularly when they can give her such happiness as every woman clings to.'

'The elder must be sixteen,' said Popinot.

'Fifteen,' said the Marquise eagerly.

Here Bianchon and Rastignac looked at each other. Madame d'Espard bit her lips.

'What can the age of my children matter to you?'

'Well, Madame,' said the lawyer, without seeming to attach any importance to his words, 'a lad of fifteen and his brother, of thirteen, I suppose, have legs and their wits about them; they might come to see you on the sly. If they do not, it is because they obey their father, and to obey him in that matter they must love him very dearly.'

'I do not understand,' said the Marquise.

'You do not know, perhaps,' replied Popinot, 'that in your petition your attorney represents your children as being very unhappy with their father?'

Madame d'Espard replied with charming innocence—

'I do not know what my attorney may have put into my mouth.'

'Forgive my inferences,' said Popinot, 'but Justice weighs everything. What I ask you, Madame, is suggested by my wish thoroughly to understand the matter. By your account M. d'Espard deserted you on the most frivolous pretext. Instead of going to Briançon, where he wished to take you, he remained in Paris. This point is not clear. Did he know this Madame Jeanrenaud before his marriage?'

'No, Monsieur,' replied the Marquise, with some asperity, visible only to Rastignac and the Chevalier d'Espard.

She was offended at being cross-questioned by this lawyer when she had intended to beguile his judgment; but as Popinot still looked stupid from sheer absence of mind, she ended by attributing his interrogatory to the Questioning Spirit of Voltaire's bailiff.

'My parents,' she went on, 'married me at the age of sixteen to M. d'Espard, whose name, fortune, and mode of life were such as my family looked for in the man who was to be my husband. M. d'Espard was then six-and-twenty; he was a gentleman in the English sense of the word; his manners pleased me, he seemed to have plenty of ambition, and I like ambitious people,' she added,

looking at Rastignac. 'If M. d'Espard had never met that Madame Jeanrenaud, his character, his learning, his acquirements would have raised him—as his friends then believed—to high office in the Government. King Charles x., at that time Monsieur, had the greatest esteem for him, and a peer's seat, an appointment at Court, some important post certainly would have been his. That woman turned his head, and has ruined all the prospects of my family.'

'What were M. d'Espard's religious opinions at that time?'

'He was, and is still, a very pious man.'

'You do not suppose that Madame Jeanrenaud may have influenced him by mysticism?'

'No, Monsieur.'

'You have a very fine house, Madame,' said Popinot suddenly, taking his hands out of his pockets, and rising to pick up his coat-tails and warm himself. 'This boudoir is very nice, those chairs are magnificent, the whole apartment is sumptuous. You must indeed be most unhappy when, seeing yourself here, you know that your children are ill lodged, ill clothed, and ill fed. I can imagine nothing more terrible for a mother.'

'Yes, indeed. I should be so glad to give the poor little fellows some amusement, while their father keeps them at work from morning till night at that wretched history of China.'

'You give handsome balls; they would enjoy them, but they might acquire a taste for dissipation. However, their father might send them to you once or twice in the course of the winter.'

'He brings them here on my birthday and on New Year's Day. On those days M. d'Espard does me the favour of dining here with them.'

'It is very singular behaviour,' said the judge, with an air of conviction. 'Have you ever seen this Dame Jeanrenaud?'

'My brother-in-law one day, out of interest in his brother——'

'Ah! Monsieur is M. d'Espard's bother?' said the lawyer, interrupting her.

The Chevalier bowed, but did not speak.

'M. d'Espard, who has watched this affair, took me to the Oratoire, where this woman goes to sermon, for she is a Protestant. I saw her; she is not in the least attractive; she looks like a butcher's wife, extremely fat, horribly marked with the smallpox; she has feet and hands like a man's, she squints, in short, she is monstrous!'

'It is inconceivable,' said the judge, looking like the most imbecile judge in the whole kingdom. 'And this creature lives near here, Rue Verte, in a fine house? There are no plain folks left, it would seem?'

'In a mansion on which her son has spent absurd sums.'

'Madame,' said Popinot, 'I live in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau; I know nothing of such expenses. What do you call absurd sums?'

'Well,' said the Marquise, 'a stable with five horses and three carriages, a phaeton, a brougham, and a cabriolet.'

'That costs a large sum, then?' asked Popinot in surprise.

'Enormous sums!' said Rastignac, intervening. 'Such an establishment would cost, for the stables, the keeping the carriages in order, and the liveries for the men, between fifteen and sixteen thousand francs a year.'

'Should you think so, Madame?' said the judge, looking much astonished.

'Yes, at least,' replied the Marquise.

'And the furniture, too, must have cost a lot of money?'

'More than a hundred thousand francs,' replied Madame d'Espard, who could not help smiling at the lawyer's vulgarity.

'Judges, Madame, are apt to be incredulous; it is what they are paid for, and I am incredulous. The Baron Jeanrenaud and his mother must have fleeced M. d'Espard most preposterously, if what you say is correct. There is a stable establishment which, by your account, costs sixteen thousand francs a year. Housekeeping, servants' wages, and the gross expenses of the house itself must run to twice as much; that makes a total of from fifty to sixty thousand francs a year. Do you suppose that these people, formerly so extremely poor, can have so large a fortune? A million yields scarcely forty thousand a year.'

'Monsieur, the mother and son invested the money given them by M. d'Espard in the funds when they were at 60 to 80. I should think their income must be more than sixty thousand francs. And then the son has fine appointments.'

'If they spend sixty thousand francs a year,' said the judge, 'how much do you spend?'

'Well,' said Madame d'Espard, 'about the same.' The Chevalier started a little, the Marquise coloured; Bianchon looked at Rastignac; but Popinot preserved an expression of simplicity which quite deceived Madame d'Espard. The Chevalier took no part in the conversation; he saw that all was lost.

'These people, Madame, might be indicted before the superior Court,' said Popinot.

'That was my opinion,' exclaimed the Marquise, enchanted. 'If threatened with the police, they would have come to terms.'

'Madame,' said Popinot, 'when M. d'Espard left you, did he not give you a power of attorney enabling you to manage and control your own affairs?'

'I do not understand the object of all these questions,' said the Marquise with petulance. 'It seems to me that if you would only consider the state in which I am placed by my husband's insanity, you

ought to be troubling yourself about him, and not about me.'

'We are coming to that, Madame,' said the judge. 'Before placing in your hands, or in any others, the control of M. d'Espard's property, supposing he were pronounced incapable, the Court must inquire as to how you have managed your own. If M. d'Espard gave you power, he would have shown confidence in you, and the Court would recognise the fact. Had you any power from him? You might have bought or sold house property or invested money in business?'

'No, Monsieur, the Blamont-Chauvrys are not in the habit of trading,' said she, extremely nettled in her pride as an aristocrat, and forgetting the business in hand. 'My property is intact, and M. d'Espard gave me no power to act.'

The Chevalier put his hand over his eyes not to betray the vexation he felt at his sister-in-law's short-sightedness, for she was ruining herself by her answers. Popinot had gone straight to the mark in spite of his apparent doublings.

'Madame,' said the lawyer, indicating the Chevalier, 'this gentleman, of course, is your near connection? May we speak openly before these other gentlemen?'

'Speak on,' said the Marquise, surprised at this caution.

'Well, Madame, granting that you spend only sixty thousand francs a year, to any one who sees your stables, your house, your train of servants, and a style of housekeeping which strikes me as far more luxurious than that of the Jeanrenauds, that sum would seem well laid out.'

The Marquise bowed an agreement.

'But,' continued the judge, 'if you have no more than twenty-six thousand francs a year, you may have a hundred thousand francs of debts. The Court would therefore have a right to imagine that the motives which

prompt you to ask that your husband may be deprived of the control of his property are complicated by self-interest and the need for paying your debts—if—you—have—any. The requests addressed to me have interested me in your position; consider fully and make your confession. If my suppositions have hit the truth, there is yet time to avoid the blame which the Court would have a perfect right to express in the saving clauses of the verdict if you could not show your attitude to be absolutely honourable and clear.

'It is our duty to examine the motives of the applicant as well as to listen to the plea of the witness under examination, to ascertain whether the petitioner may not have been prompted by passion, by a desire for money, which is unfortunately too common——'

The Marquise was on Saint Laurence's gridiron.

'And I must have explanations on this point. Madame, I have no wish to call you to account; I only want to know how you have managed to live at the rate of sixty thousand francs a year, and that for some years past. There are plenty of women who achieve this in their housekeeping, but you are not one of those. Tell me, you may have the most legitimate resources, a royal pension, or some claim on the indemnities lately granted; but even then you must have had your husband's authority to receive them.'

The Marquise did not speak.

'You must remember,' Popinot went on, 'that M. d'Espard may wish to enter a protest, and his counsel will have a right to find out whether you have any creditors. This boudoir is newly furnished, your rooms are not now furnished with the things left to you by M. d'Espard in 1816. If, as you did me the honour of informing me, furniture is costly for the Jeanrenauds, it must be yet more so for you, who are a great lady. Though I am a judge, I am but a man; I may be wrong—tell me so. Remember the duties imposed on

me by the law, and the rigorous inquiries it demands, when the case before it is the suspension from all his functions of the father of a family in the prime of life. So you will pardon me, Madame la Marquise, for laying all these difficulties before you; it will be easy for you to give me an explanation.

'When a man is pronounced incapable of the control of his own affairs, a trustee has to be appointed. Who will be the trustee?'

'His brother,' said the Marquise.

The Chevalier bowed. There was a short silence, very uncomfortable for the five persons who were present. The judge, in sport as it were, had laid open the woman's sore place. Popinot's countenance of common, clumsy good-nature, at which the Marquise, the Chevalier, and Rastignac had been inclined to laugh, had gained importance in their eyes. As they stole a look at him, they discerned the various expressions of that eloquent mouth. The ridiculous mortal was a judge of acumen. His studious notice of the boudoir was accounted for: he had started from the gilt elephant supporting the chimney-clock, examining all this luxury, and had ended by reading this woman's soul.

'If the Marquis d'Espard is mad about China, I see that you are not less fond of its products,' said Popinot, looking at the porcelain on the chimney-piece. 'But perhaps it was from M. le Marquis that you had these charming Oriental pieces,' and he pointed to some precious trifles.

This irony, in very good taste, made Bianchon smile, and petrified Rastignac, while the Marquise bit her thin lips.

'Instead of being the protector of a woman placed in a cruel dilemna—an alternative between losing her fortune and her children, and being regarded as her husband's enemy,' she said, 'you accuse me, Monsieur! You suspect my motives! You must own that your conduct is strange!'

'Madame,' said the judge eagerly, 'the caution exercised by the Court in such cases as these might have given you, in any other judge, a perhaps less indulgent critic than I am.—And do you suppose that M. d'Espard's lawyer will show you any great consideration? Will he not be suspicious of motives which may be perfectly pure and disinterested? Your life will be at his mercy; he will inquire into it without qualifying his search by the respectful deference I have for you.'

'I am much obliged to you, Monsieur,' said the Marquise satirically. 'Admitting for the moment that I owe thirty thousand, or fifty thousand francs, in the first place, it would be a mere trifle to the d'Espards and the de Blamont-Chauvrys. But if my husband is not in the possession of his mental faculties, would that prevent his being pronounced incapable?'

'No, Madame,' said Popinot.

'Although you have questioned me with a sort of cunning which I should not have expected in a judge, and under circumstances where straightforwardness would have answered your purpose,' she went on, 'I will tell you without subterfuge that my position in the world, and the efforts I have to make to keep up my connection, are not in the least to my taste. I began my life by a long period of solitude; but my children's interest appealed to me; I felt that I must fill their father's place. By receiving my friends, by keeping up all this connection, by contracting these debts, I have secured their future welfare; I have prepared for them a brilliant career where they will find help and favour; and to have what has thus been acquired, many a man of business, lawyer or banker, would gladly pay all it has cost me.'

'I appreciate your devoted conduct, Madame,' replied Popinot. 'It does you honour, and I blame you for nothing. A judge belongs to all: he must know and weigh every fact.'

Madame d'Espard's tact and practice in estimating men made her understand that M. Popinot was not to be influenced by any consideration. She had counted on an ambitious lawyer, she had found a man of conscience. She at once thought of finding other means for securing the success of her side.

The servants brought in tea.

'Have you any further explanations to give me, Madame?' said Popinot, seeing these preparations.

'Monsieur,' she replied haughtily, 'do your business your own way; question M. d'Espard, and you will pity me, I am sure.' She raised her head, looking Popinot in the face with pride, mingled with impertinence; the worthy man bowed himself out respectfully.

'A nice man is your uncle,' said Rastignac to Bianchon. 'Is he really so dense? Does not he know what the Marquise d'Espard is, what her influence means, her unavowed power over people? The Keeper of the Seals will be with her to-morrow——'

'My dear fellow, how can I help it?' said Bianchon. 'Did not I warn you? He is not a man you can get over.'

'No,' said Rastignac; 'he is a man you must run over.'

The doctor was obliged to make his bow to the Marquise and her mute Chevalier to catch up Popinot, who, not being the man to endure an embarrassing position, was pacing through the rooms.

'That woman owes a hundred thousand crowns,' said the judge, as he stepped into his nephew's cab.

'And what do you think of the case?'

'I,' said the judge. 'I never have an opinion till I have gone into everything. To-morrow early I will send to Madame Jeanrenaud to call on me in my private office at four o'clock, to make her explain the facts which concern her, for she is compromised.'

'I should very much like to know what the end will be.'

'Why, bless me, do not you see that the Marquise is

the tool of that tall lean man who never uttered a word? There is a strain of Cain in him, but of the Cain who goes to the Law Courts for his bludgeon, and there, unluckily for him, we keep more than one Damocles' sword.'

'Oh, Rastignac! what brought you into that boat, I wonder?' exclaimed Bianchon.

'Ah, we are used to seeing these little family conspiracies,' said Popinot. 'Not a year passes without a number of verdicts of "insufficient evidence" against applications of this kind. In our state of society such an attempt brings no dishonour, while we send a poor devil to the galleys if he breaks a pane of glass dividing him from a bowl full of gold. Our Code is not faultless.'

'But these are the facts?'

'My boy, do you not know all the judicial romances with which clients impose on their attorneys? If the attorneys condemned themselves to state nothing but the truth, they would not earn enough to keep their office open.'

Next day, at four in the afternoon, a very stout dame, looking a good deal like a cask dressed up in a gown and belt, mounted Judge Popinot's stairs, perspiring and panting. She had, with great difficulty, got out of a green landau, which suited her to a miracle; you could not think of the woman without the landau, or the landau without the woman.

'It is I, my dear sir,' said she, appearing in the doorway of the judge's room. 'Madame Jeanrenaud, whom you summoned exactly as if I were a thief, neither more nor less.'

The common words were spoken in a common voice, broken by the wheezing of asthma, and ending in a cough.

'When I go through a damp place, I can't tell you what I suffer, sir. I shall never make old bones, saving your presence. However, here I am.'

The lawyer was quite amazed at the appearance of this supposed Maréchale d'Ancre. Madame Jeanrenaud's face was pitted with an infinite number of little holes, was very red, with a pug nose and a low forehead, and was as round as a ball; for everything about the good woman was round. She had the bright eyes of a country woman, an honest gaze, a cheerful tone, and chestnut hair held in place by a bonnet cap under a green bonnet decked with a shabby bunch of auriculas. Her stupendous bust was a thing to laugh at, for it made one fear some grotesque explosion every time she coughed. Her enormous legs were of the shape which make the Paris street boy describe such a woman as being built on piles. The widow wore a green gown trimmed with chinchilla, which looked on her as a splash of dirty oil would look on a bride's veil. In short, everything about her harmonised with her last words: 'Here I am.'

'Madame,' said Popinot, 'you are suspected of having used some seductive arts to induce M. d'Espard to hand over to you very considerable sums of money.'

'Of what! of what!' cried she. 'Of seductive arts? But, my dear sir, you are a man to be respected, and, moreover, as a lawyer you ought to have some good sense. Look at me! Tell me if I am likely to seduce any one. I cannot tie my own shoes, nor even stoop. For these twenty years past, the Lord be praised, I have not dared to put on a pair of stays under pain of sudden death. I was as thin as an asparagus stalk when I was seventeen, and pretty too—I may say so now. So I married Jeanrenaud, a good fellow, and head-man on the salt-barges. I had my boy, who is a fine young man; he is my pride, and it is not holding myself cheap to say he is my best piece of work. My little Jeanrenaud was a soldier who did Napoleon credit, and who served in the Imperial Guard. But, alas! at the death of my old man, who was drowned, times changed for the worse. I had the smallpox. I was kept two years in my room with-

out stirring, and I came out of it the size you see me, hideous for ever, and as wretched as could be. These are my seductive arts.'

'But what, then, can the reasons be that have induced M. d'Espard to give you sums——?'

'Hugious sums, Monsieur, say the word; I do not mind. But as to his reasons, I am not at liberty to explain them.'

'You are wrong. At this moment, his family, very naturally alarmed, are about to bring an action——'

'Heavens above us!' said the good woman, starting up. 'Is it possible that he should be worried on my account? That king of men, a man that has not his match! Rather than he should have the smallest trouble, or a hair less on his head I could almost say, we would return every sou, Monsieur. Write that down on your papers. Heaven above us! I will go at once and tell Jeanrenaud what is going on! A pretty thing indeed!'

And the little old woman went out, rolled herself downstairs, and disappeared.

'That one tells no lies,' said Popinot to himself. 'Well, to-morrow I shall know the whole story, for I shall go to see the Marquis d'Espard.'

People who have outlived the age when a man wastes his vitality at random, know how great an influence may be exercised on more important events by apparently trivial incidents, and will not be surprised at the weight here given to the following minor fact. Next day Popinot had an attack of coryza, a complaint which is not dangerous, and generally known by the absurd and inadequate name of a cold in the head.

The judge, who could not suppose that the delay could be serious, feeling himself a little feverish, kept his room, and did not go to see the Marquis d'Espard. This day lost was, to this affair, what on the Day of Dupes the cup of soup had been, taken by Marie de

Medici, which, by delaying her meeting with Louis XIII., enabled Richelieu to arrive at Saint-Germain before her, and recapture his royal slave.

Before accompanying the lawyer and his registering clerk to the Marquis d'Espard's house, it may be as well to glance at the home and the private affairs of this father of sons whom his wife's petition represented to be a madman.

Here and there in the old parts of Paris a few buildings may still be seen in which the archæologist can discern an intention of decorating the city, and that love of property which leads the owner to give a durable character to the structure. The house in which M. d'Espard was then living, in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, was one of these old mansions, built in stone, and not devoid of a certain richness of style; but time had blackened the stone, and revolutions in the town had damaged it both outside and inside. The dignitaries who formerly dwelt in the neighbourhood of the University having disappeared with the great ecclesiastical foundations, this house had become the home of industries and of inhabitants whom it was never destined to shelter. During the last century a printing establishment had worn down the polished floors, soiled the carved wood, blackened the walls, and altered the principal internal arrangements. Formerly the residence of a Cardinal, this fine house was now divided among plebeian tenants. The character of the architecture showed that it had been built under the reigns of Henry III., Henry IV., and Louis XIII., at the time when the hotels Mignon and Serpente were erected in the same neighbourhood, with the palace of the Princess Palatine, and the Sorbonne. An old man could remember having heard it called, in the last century, the hotel Duperron, so it seemed probable that the illustrious Cardinal of that name had built, or perhaps merely lived in it.

There still exists, indeed, in the corner of the courtyard, a *perron* or flight of several outer steps by which the house is entered; and the way into the garden on the garden front is down a similar flight of steps. In spite of dilapidations, the luxury lavished by the architect on the balustrade and entrance porch crowning these two *perrons* suggests the simple-minded purpose of commemorating the owner's name, a sort of sculptured pun which our ancestors often allowed themselves. Finally, in support of this evidence, archæologists can still discern in the medallions which show on the principal front some traces of the cords of the Roman hat.

M. le Marquis d'Espard lived on the ground floor, in order, no doubt, to enjoy the garden, which might be called spacious for that neighbourhood, and which lay open to the south, two advantages imperatively necessary for his children's health. The situation of the house, in a street on a steep hill, as its name indicates, secured these ground-floor rooms against ever being damp. M. d'Espard had taken them, no doubt, for a very moderate price, rents being low at the time when he settled in that quarter, in order to be among the schools and to superintend his boys' education. Moreover, the state in which he found the place, with everything to repair, had no doubt induced the owner to be accommodating. Thus M. d'Espard had been able to go to some expense to settle himself suitably without being accused of extravagance. The loftiness of the rooms, the panelling, of which nothing survived but the frames, the decoration of the ceilings, all displayed the dignity which the prelacy stamped on whatever it attempted or created, and which artists discern to this day in the smallest relic that remains, though it be but a book, a dress, the panel of a bookcase, or an armchair.

The Marquis had the rooms painted in the rich brown tones beloved of the Dutch and of the citizens of Old Paris, hues which lend such good effects to the

painter of *genre*. The panels were hung with plain paper in harmony with the paint. The window curtains were of inexpensive materials, but chosen so as to produce a generally happy result; the furniture was not too crowded and judiciously placed. Any one on going into this home could not resist a sense of sweet peacefulness, produced by the perfect calm, the stillness which prevailed, by the unpretentious unity of colour, the keeping of the picture, in the words a painter might use. A certain nobleness in the details, the exquisite cleanliness of the furniture, and a perfect concord of men and things, all brought the word 'suavity' to the lips.

Few persons were admitted to the rooms used by the Marquis and his two sons, whose life might perhaps seem mysterious to their neighbours. In a wing towards the street, on the third floor, there are three large rooms which had been left in the state of dilapidation and grotesque bareness to which they had been reduced by the printing works. These three rooms, devoted to the evolution of the *Picturesque History of China*, were contrived to serve as a writing-room, a depository, and a private room, where M. d'Espard sat during part of the day; for after breakfast till four in the afternoon the Marquis remained in this room on the third floor to work at the publication he had undertaken. Visitors wanting to see him commonly found him there, and often the two boys on their return from school resorted thither. Thus the ground-floor rooms were a sort of sanctuary where the father and sons spent their time from the hour of dinner till the next day, and his domestic life was carefully closed against the public eye.

His only servants were a cook—an old woman who had long been attached to his family, and a man-servant forty years old, who was with him when he married Mademoiselle de Blamont. His children's nurse had also remained with them, and the minute care to which the apartment bore witness revealed the sense of order and

the maternal affection expended by this woman in her master's interest, in the management of his house, and the charge of his children. These three good souls, grave and uncommunicative folks, seemed to have entered into the idea which ruled the Marquis's domestic life. And the contrast between their habits and those of most servants was a peculiarity which cast an air of mystery over the house, and fomented the calumny to which M. d'Espard himself lent occasion. Very laudable motives had made him determine never to be on visiting terms with any of the other tenants in the house. In undertaking to educate his boys he wished to keep them from all contact with strangers. Perhaps, too, he wished to avoid the intrusion of neighbours.

In a man of his rank, at a time when the *Quartier Latin* was distracted by Liberalism, such conduct was sure to rouse in opposition a host of petty passions, of feelings whose folly is only to be measured by their meanness, the outcome of porters' gossip and malevolent tattle from door to door, all unknown to M. d'Espard and his retainers. His man-servant was stigmatised as a Jesuit, his cook as a sly fox; the nurse was in collusion with Madame Jeanrenaud to rob the madman. The madman was the Marquis. By degrees the other tenants came to regard as proofs of madness a number of things they had noticed in M. d'Espard, and passed through the sieve of their judgment without discerning any reasonable motive for them.

Having no belief in the success of the *History of China*, they had managed to convince the landlord of the house that M. d'Espard had no money just at a time when, with the forgetfulness which often befalls busy men, he had allowed the tax-collector to send him a summons for non-payment of arrears. The landlord had forthwith claimed his quarter's rent from January 1st by sending in a receipt, which the porter's wife had amused herself by detaining. On the 15th a summons to pay was

served on M. d'Espard, the portress had delivered it at her leisure, and he supposed it to be some misunderstanding, not conceiving of any incivility from a man in whose house he had been living for twelve years. The Marquis was actually seized by a bailiff at the time when his man-servant had gone to carry the money for the rent to the landlord.

This arrest, insidiously reported to the persons with whom he was in treaty for his undertaking, had alarmed some of them who were already doubtful of M. d'Espard's solvency in consequence of the enormous sums which Baron Jeanrenaud and his mother were said to be receiving from him. And, indeed, these suspicions on the part of the tenants, the creditors, and the landlord had some excuse in the Marquis's extreme economy in housekeeping. He conducted it as a ruined man might. His servants always paid in ready money for the most trifling necessaries of life, and acted as not choosing to take credit; if now they had asked for anything on credit, it would probably have been refused, calumnious gossip had been so widely believed in the neighbourhood. There are tradesmen who like those of their customers who pay badly when they see them often, while they hate others, and very good ones, who hold themselves on too high a level to allow of any familiarity as *chums*, a vulgar but expressive word. Men are made so; in almost every class they will allow to a gossip, or a vulgar soul that flatters them, facilities and favours they refuse to the superiority they resent, in whatever form it may show itself. The shopkeeper who rails at the Court has his courtiers.

In short, the manners of the Marquis and his children were certain to arouse ill-feeling in their neighbours, and to work them up by degrees to the pitch of malevolence when men do not hesitate at an act of meanness if only it may damage the adversary they have themselves created.

M. d'Espard was a gentleman, as his wife was a lady,

by birth and breeding; noble types, already so rare in France that the observer can easily count the persons who perfectly realise them. These two characters are based on primitive ideas, on beliefs that may be called innate, on habits formed in infancy, and which have ceased to exist. To believe in pure blood, in a privileged race, to stand in thought above other men, must we not from birth have measured the distance which divides patricians from the mob? To command, must we not have never met our equal? And finally, must not education inculcate the ideas with which Nature inspires those great men on whose brow she has placed a crown before their mother has ever set a kiss there? These ideas, this education, are no longer possible in France, where for forty years past chance has arrogated the right of making noblemen by dipping them in the blood of battles, by gilding them with glory, by crowning them with the halo of genius; where the abolition of entail and of eldest sonship, by frittering away estates, compels the nobleman to attend to his own business instead of attending to affairs of state, and where personal greatness can only be such greatness as is acquired by long and patient toil: quite a new era.

Regarded as a relic of that great institution known as feudalism, M. d'Espard deserved respectful admiration. If he believed himself to be by blood the superior of other men, he also believed in all the obligations of nobility; he had the virtues and the strength it demands. He had brought up his children in his own principles, and taught them from the cradle the religion of their caste. A deep sense of their own dignity, pride of name, the conviction that they were by birth great, gave rise in them to a kingly pride, the courage of knights, and the protecting kindness of a baronial lord; their manners, harmonising with their notions, would have become princes, and offended all the world of the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève—a world, above

all others, of equality, where every one believed that M. d'Espard was ruined, and where all, from the lowest to the highest, refused the privileges of nobility to a nobleman without money, because they all were ready to allow an enriched bourgeois to usurp them. Thus the lack of communion between this family and other persons was as much moral as it was physical.

In the father and the children alike, their personality harmonised with the spirit within. M. d'Espard, at this time about fifty, might have sat as a model to represent the aristocracy of birth in the nineteenth century. He was slight and fair; there was in the outline and general expression of his face a native distinction which spoke of lofty sentiments, but it bore the impress of a deliberate coldness which commanded respect a little too decidedly. His aquiline nose bent at the tip from left to right, a slight crookedness which was not devoid of grace; his blue eyes, his high forehead, prominent enough at the brows to form a thick ridge that checked the light and shaded his eyes, all indicated a spirit of rectitude, capable of perseverance and perfect loyalty, while it gave a singular look to his countenance. This pent-house forehead might, in fact, hint at a touch of madness, and his thick-knitted eyebrows added to the apparent eccentricity. He had the white well-kept hands of a gentleman; his foot was high and narrow. His hesitating speech—not merely as to his pronunciation, which was that of a stammerer, but also in the expression of his ideas, his thought, and language—produced on the mind of the hearer the impression of a man who, in familiar phraseology, comes and goes, feels his way, tries everything, breaks off his gestures, and finishes nothing. This defect was purely superficial, and in contrast with the decisiveness of a firmly-set mouth, and the strongly-marked character of his physiognomy. His rather jerky gait matched his mode of speech. These peculiarities helped to affirm his supposed insanity. In spite of his

elegant appearance, he was systematically parsimonious in his personal expenses, and wore the same black frock-coat for three or four years, brushed with extreme care by his old man-servant.

As to the children, they both were handsome, and endowed with a grace which did not exclude an expression of aristocratic disdain. They had the bright colouring, the clear eye, the transparent flesh which reveal habits of purity, regularity of life, and a due proportion of work and play. They both had black hair and blue eyes, and a twist in their nose, like their father; but their mother, perhaps, had transmitted to them the dignity of speech, of look and mien, which are hereditary in the Blamont-Chauvrys. Their voices, as clear as crystal, had an emotional quality, the softness which proves so seductive; they had, in short, the voice a woman would willingly listen to after feeling the flame of their looks. But, above all, they had the modesty of pride, a chaste reserve, a *touch-me-not* which at a maturer age might have seemed intentional coyness, so much did their demeanour inspire a wish to know them. The elder, Comte Clément de Nègrepelisse, was close upon his sixteenth year. For the last two years he had ceased to wear the pretty English round jacket which his brother, Vicomte Camille d'Espard, still wore. The Count, who for the last six months went no more to the College Henri IV., was dressed in the style of a young man enjoying the first pleasures of fashion. His father had not wished to condemn him to a year's useless study of philosophy; he was trying to give his knowledge some consistency by the study of transcendental mathematics. At the same time, the Marquis was having him taught Eastern languages, the international law of Europe, heraldry, and history from the original sources—charters, early documents, and collections of edicts. Camille had lately begun to study rhetoric.

The day when Popinot arranged to go to question M.

d'Espard was a Thursday, a holiday. At about nine in the morning, before their father was awake, the brothers were playing in the garden. Clément was finding it hard to refuse his brother, who was anxious to go to the shooting gallery for the first time, and who begged him to second his request to the Marquis. The Viscount always rather took advantage of his weakness, and was very fond of wrestling with his brother. So the couple were quarrelling and fighting in play like schoolboys. As they ran in the garden, chasing each other, they made so much noise as to wake their father, who came to the window without their perceiving him in the heat of the fray. The Marquis amused himself with watching his two children twisted together like snakes, their faces flushed by the exertion of their strength; their complexion was rose and white, their eyes flashed sparks, their limbs writhed like cords in the fire; they fell, sprang up again, and caught each other like athletes in a circus, affording their father one of those moments of happiness which would make amends for the keenest anxieties of a busy life. Two other persons, one on the second and one on the first floor, were also looking into the garden, and saying that the old madman was amusing himself by making his children fight. Immediately a number of heads appeared at the windows; the Marquis, noticing them, called a word to his sons, who at once climbed up to the window and jumped into his room, and Clément obtained the permission asked by Camille.

All through the house every one was talking of the Marquis's new form of insanity. When Popinot arrived at about twelve o'clock, accompanied by his clerk, the portress, when he asked for M. d'Espard, conducted him to the third floor, telling him 'as how M. d'Espard, no longer ago than that very morning, had set on his two children to fight, and laughed like the monster he was on seeing the younger biting the elder till he bled,

and as how no doubt he longed to see them kill each other.—Don't ask me the reason why,' she added; 'he doesn't know himself!'

Just as the woman spoke these decisive words, she had brought the judge to the landing on the third floor, face to face with a door covered with notices announcing the successive numbers of the *Picturesque History of China*. The muddy floor, the dirty banisters, the door where the printers had left their marks, the dilapidated window, and the ceiling on which the apprentices had amused themselves with drawing monstrosities with the smoky flare of their tallow dips, the piles of paper and litter heaped up in the corners, intentionally or from sheer neglect—in short, every detail of the picture lying before his eyes, agreed so well with the facts alleged by the Marquise that the judge, in spite of his impartiality, could not help believing them.

'There you are, gentlemen,' said the porter's wife; 'there is the manifactor, where the Chinese swallow up enough to feed the whole neighbourhood.'

The clerk looked at the judge with a smile, and Popinot found it hard to keep his countenance. They went together into the outer room, where sat an old man, who, no doubt, performed the functions of office clerk, shopman, and cashier. This old man was the Maître Jacques of China. Along the walls ran long shelves, on which the published numbers lay in piles. A partition in wood, with a grating lined with green curtains, cut off the end of the room, forming a private office. A till with a slit to admit or disgorge crown pieces indicated the cash-desk.

'M. d'Espard?' said Popinot, addressing the man, who wore a grey blouse.

The shopman opened the door into the next room, where the lawyer and his companion saw a venerable old man, white-headed and simply dressed, wearing the Cross of Saint-Louis, seated at a desk. He ceased com-

paring some sheets of coloured prints to look up at the two visitors. This room was an unpretentious office, full of books and proof-sheets. There was a black wood table at which some one, at the moment absent, no doubt was accustomed to work.

'The Marquis d'Espard?' said Popinot.

'No, Monsieur,' said the old man, rising; 'what do you want with him?' he added, coming forward, and showing by his demeanour the dignified manners and habits due to a gentlemanly education.

'We wish to speak to him on business exclusively personal to himself,' replied Popinot.

'D'Espard, here are some gentlemen who want to see you,' then said the old man, going into the furthest room, where the Marquis was sitting by the fire reading the newspaper.

This innermost room had a shabby carpet, the windows were hung with grey holland curtains; the furniture consisted of a few mahogany chairs, two armchairs, a desk with a revolving front, an ordinary office table, and, on the chimney-shelf, a dingy clock and two old candlesticks. The old man led the way for Popinot and his registrar, and pulled forward two chairs, as though he were master of the place; M. d'Espard left it to him. After the preliminary civilities, during which the judge watched the supposed lunatic, the Marquis naturally asked what was the object of this visit. On this Popinot glanced significantly at the old gentleman and the Marquis.

'I believe, Monsieur le Marquis,' said he, 'that the character of my functions, and the inquiry that has brought me here, make it desirable that we should be alone, though it is understood by law that in such cases the inquiries have a sort of family publicity. I am judge on the Inferior Court of Appeal for the Department of the Seine, and charged by the President with the duty of examining you as to certain facts set forth in a

petition for a Commission in Lunacy on the part of the Marquise d'Espard.'

The old man withdrew. When the lawyer and the Marquis were alone, the clerk shut the door, and seated himself unceremoniously at the office table, where he laid out his papers and prepared to take down his notes. Popinot had still kept his eye on M. d'Espard; he was watching the effect on him of this crude statement, so painful for a man in full possession of his reason. The Marquis d'Espard, whose face was usually pale, as are those of fair men, suddenly turned scarlet with anger; he trembled for an instant, sat down, laid his paper on the chimney-piece, and looked down. In a moment he had recovered his gentlemanly dignity, and looked steadily at the judge, as if to read in his countenance the indications of his character.

'How is it, Monsieur,' he asked, 'that I have had no notice of such a petition?'

'Monsieur le Marquis, persons on whom such a commission is held, not being supposed to have the use of their reason, any notice of the petition is unnecessary. The duty of the Court chiefly consists in verifying the allegations of the petitioner.'

'Nothing can be fairer,' replied the Marquis. 'Well, then, Monsieur, be so good as to tell me what I ought to do——'

'You have only to answer my questions, omitting nothing. However delicate the reasons may be which may have led you to act in such a manner as to give Madame d'Espard a pretext for her petition, speak without fear. It is unnecessary to assure you that lawyers know their duties, and that in such cases the profoundest secrecy——'

'Monsieur,' said the Marquis, whose face expressed the sincerest pain, 'if my explanations should lead to any blame being attached to Madame d'Espard's conduct, what will be the result?'

'The Court may add its censure to its reasons for its decision.'

'Is such censure optional? If I were to stipulate with you, before replying, that nothing should be said that could annoy Madame d'Espard in the event of your report being in my favour, would the Court take my request into consideration?'

The judge looked at the Marquis, and the two men exchanged sentiments of equal magnanimity.

'Noël,' said Popinot to his registrar, 'go into the other room. If you can be of use, I will call you in.—If, as I am inclined to think,' he went on, speaking to the Marquis when the clerk had gone out, 'I find that there is some misunderstanding in this case, I can promise you, Monsieur, that on your application the Court will act with due courtesy.

'There is a leading fact put forward by Madame d'Espard, the most serious of all, of which I must beg for an explanation,' said the judge after a pause. 'It refers to the dissipation of your fortune to the advantage of a certain Madame Jeanrenaud, the widow of a barge-master—or rather, to that of her son, Colonel Jeanrenaud, for whom you are said to have procured an appointment, to have exhausted your influence with the King, and at last to have extended such protection as secures him a good marriage. The petition suggests that such a friendship is more devoted than any feelings, even those which morality must disapprove——'

A sudden flush crimsoned the Marquis's face and forehead, tears even started to his eyes, for his eyelashes were wet, then wholesome pride crushed the emotions, which in a man are accounted a weakness.

'To tell you the truth, Monsieur,' said the Marquis, in a broken voice, 'you place me in a strange dilemma. The motives of my conduct were to have died with me. To reveal them I must disclose to you some secret wounds, must place the honour of my family in your

keeping, and must speak of myself, a delicate matter, as you will fully understand. I hope, Monsieur, that it will all remain a secret between us. You will, no doubt, be able to find in the formulas of the law one which will allow of judgment being pronounced without any betrayal of my confidences.'

'So far as that goes, it is perfectly possible, Monsieur le Marquis.'

'Some time after my marriage,' said M. d'Espard, 'my wife having run into considerable expenses, I was obliged to have recourse to borrowing. You know what was the position of noble families during the Revolution; I had not been able to keep a steward or a man of business. Nowadays gentlemen are for the most part obliged to manage their affairs themselves. Most of my title-deeds had been brought to Paris, from Languedoc, Provence, or le Comtat, by my father, who dreaded, and not without reason, the inquisition which family title-deeds, and what were then styled the "parchments" of the privileged class, brought down on the owners.

'Our name is Nègrepelisse; d'Espard is a title acquired in the time of Henry IV. by a marriage which brought us the estates and titles of the house of d'Espard, on condition of our bearing an escutcheon of pretence on our coat-of-arms, those of the house of d'Espard, an old family of Béarn, connected in the female line with that of Albret: quarterly, paly of or and sable; and azure two griffins' claws armed, gules in saltire, with the famous motto *Des partem leonis*. At the time of this alliance we lost Nègrepelisse, a little town which was as famous during the religious struggles as was my ancestor who then bore the name. Captain de Nègrepelisse was ruined by the burning of all his property, for the Protestants did not spare a friend of Montluc's.

'The Crown was unjust to M. de Nègrepelisse; he received neither a marshal's bâton, nor a post as governor, nor any indemnity; King Charles IX., who was fond of

him, died without being able to reward him; Henri IV. arranged his marriage with Mademoiselle d'Espard, and secured him the estates of that house, but all those of the Nègrepelisses had already passed into the hands of his creditors.

'My great-grandfather, the Marquis d'Espard, was, like me, placed early in life at the head of his family by the death of his father, who, after dissipating his wife's fortune, left his son nothing but the entailed estates of the d'Espards, burdened with a jointure. The young Marquis was all the more straitened for money because he held a post at Court. Being in great favour with Louis XIV., the King's goodwill brought him a fortune. But here, Monsieur, a blot stained our escutcheon, an unconfessed and horrible stain of blood and disgrace which I am making it my business to wipe out. I discovered the secret among the deeds relating to the estate of Nègrepelisse and the packets of letters.'

At this solemn moment the Marquis spoke without hesitation or any of the repetition habitual with him; but it is a matter of common observation that persons who, in ordinary life, are afflicted with these two defects, are freed from them as soon as any passionate emotion underlies their speech.

'The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was decreed,' he went on. 'You are no doubt aware, Monsieur, that this was an opportunity for many favourites to make their fortunes. Louis XIV. bestowed on the magnates about his Court the confiscated lands of those Protestant families who did not take the prescribed steps for the sale of their property. Some persons in high favour went "Protestant-hunting," as the phrase was. I have ascertained beyond a doubt that the fortune enjoyed to this day by two ducal families is derived from lands seized from hapless merchants.

'I will not attempt to explain to you, a man of law, all the manœuvres employed to entrap the refugees who

had large fortunes to carry away. It is enough to say that the lands of Nègrepelisse, comprising twenty-two churches and rights over the town, and those of Gravenges which had formerly belonged to us, were at that time in the hands of a Protestant family. My grandfather recovered them by gift from Louis XIV. This gift was effected by documents hall-marked by atrocious iniquity. The owner of these two estates, thinking he would be able to return, had gone through the form of a sale, and was going to Switzerland to join his family, whom he had sent in advance. He wished, no doubt, to take advantage of every delay granted by the law, so as to settle the concerns of his business.

'This man was arrested by order of the governor, the trustee confessed the truth, the poor merchant was hanged, and my ancestor had the two estates. I would gladly have been able to ignore the share he took in the plot; but the governor was his uncle on the mother's side, and I have unfortunately read the letter in which he begged him to apply to Deodatus, the name agreed upon by the Court to designate the King. In this letter there is a tone of jocosity with reference to the victim, which filled me with horror. In the end, the sums of money sent by the refugee family to ransom the poor man's life were kept by the governor, who dispatched the merchant all the same.'

The Marquis paused, as though the memory of it were still too heavy for him to bear.

'This unfortunate family were named Jeanrenaud,' he went on. 'That name is enough to account for my conduct. I could never think without keen pain of the secret disgrace that weighed on my family. That fortune enabled my grandfather to marry a demoiselle de Navarreins-Lansac, heiress to the younger branch of that house, who were at that time much richer than the elder branch of the Navarreins. My father thus became one of the largest landowners in the kingdom. He was

able to marry my mother, a Grandlieu of the younger branch. Though ill-gotten, this property has been singularly profitable.

'For my part, being determined to remedy the mischief, I wrote to Switzerland, and knew no peace till I was on the traces of the Protestant victim's heirs. At last I discovered that the Jeanrenauds, reduced to abject want, had left Fribourg and returned to live in France. Finally, I found in M. Jeanrenaud, lieutenant in a cavalry regiment under Napoleon, the sole heir of this unhappy family. In my eyes, Monsieur, the rights of the Jeanrenauds were clear. To establish a prescriptive right is it not necessary that there should have been some possibility of proceeding against those who are in the enjoyment of it? To whom could these refugees have appealed? Their Court of Justice was on high, or rather, Monsieur, it was here,' and the Marquis struck his hand on his heart. 'I did not choose that my children should be able to think of me as I have thought of my father and of my ancestors. I aim at leaving them an unblemished inheritance and escutcheon. I did not choose that nobility should be a lie in my person. And, after all, politically speaking, ought those *émigrés* who are now appealing against revolutionary confiscations, to keep the property derived from antecedent confiscations by positive crimes?

'I found in M. Jeanrenaud and his mother the most perverse honesty; to hear them you would suppose that they were robbing me. In spite of all I could say, they will accept no more than the value of the lands at the time when the King bestowed them on my family. The price was settled between us at the sum of eleven hundred thousand francs, which I was to pay at my convenience and without interest. To achieve this I had to forgo my income for a long time. And then, Monsieur, began the destruction of some illusions I had allowed myself as to Madame d'Espard's character.

When I proposed to her that we should leave Paris and go into the country, where we could live respected on half of her income, and so more rapidly complete a restitution of which I spoke to her without going into the more serious details, Madame d'Espard treated me as a madman. I then understood my wife's real character. She would have approved of my grandfather's conduct without a scruple, and have laughed at the Huguenots. Terrified by her coldness, and her little affection for her children, whom she abandoned to me without a regret, I determined to leave her the command of her fortune, after paying our common debts. It was no business of hers, as she told me, to pay for my follies. As I then had not enough to live on and pay for my sons' education, I determined to educate them myself, to make them gentlemen and men of feeling. By investing my money in the funds I have been enabled to pay off my obligation sooner than I had dared to hope, for I took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the improvement in prices. If I had kept four thousand francs a year for my boys and myself, I could only have paid off twenty thousand crowns a year, and it would have taken almost eighteen years to achieve my freedom. As it is, I have lately repaid the whole of the eleven hundred thousand francs that were due. Thus I enjoy the happiness of having made this restitution without doing my children the smallest wrong.

'These, Monsieur, are the reasons for the payments made to Madame Jeanrenaud and her son.'

'So Madame d'Espard knew the motives of your retirement?' said the judge, controlling the emotion he felt at this narrative.

'Yes, Monsieur.'

Popinot gave an expressive shrug; he rose and opened the door into the next room.

'Noël, you can go,' said he to his clerk.

'Monsieur,' he went on, 'though what you have told

me is enough to enlighten me thoroughly, I should like to hear what you have to say to the other facts put forward in the petition. For instance, you are here carrying on a business such as is not habitually undertaken by a man of rank.'

'We cannot discuss that matter here,' said the Marquis, signing to the judge to quit the room. 'Nouvion,' said he to the old man, 'I am going down to my rooms; the children will soon be in; dine with us.'

'Then, Monsieur le Marquis,' said Popinot on the stairs, 'that is not your apartment?'

'No, Monsieur; I took those rooms for the office of this undertaking. You see,' and he pointed to an advertisement sheet, 'the *History* is being brought out by one of the most respectable firms in Paris, and not by me.'

The Marquis showed the lawyer into the ground-floor rooms, saying, 'This is my apartment.'

Popinot was quite touched by the poetry, not aimed at but pervading this dwelling. The weather was lovely, the windows were open, the air from the garden brought in a wholesome earthy smell, the sunshine brightened and gilded the woodwork, of a rather gloomy brown. At the sight Popinot made up his mind that a madman would hardly be capable of inventing the tender harmony of which he was at that moment conscious.

'I should like just such an apartment,' thought he. 'You think of leaving this part of the town?' he inquired.

'I hope so,' replied the Marquis. 'But I shall remain till my younger son has finished his studies, and till the children's character is thoroughly formed, before introducing them to the world and to their mother's circle. Indeed, after giving them the solid information they possess, I intend to complete it by taking them to travel to the capitals of Europe, that they may see men and

things, and become accustomed to speak the languages they have learned. And Monsieur,' he went on, giving the judge a chair in the drawing-room, 'I could not discuss the book on China with you, in the presence of an old friend of my family, the Comte de Nouvion, who, having emigrated, has returned to France without any fortune whatever, and who is my partner in this concern, less for my profit than his. Without telling him what my motives were, I explained to him that I was as poor as he, but that I had enough money to start a speculation in which he might be usefully employed. My tutor was the Abbé Grozier, whom Charles x. on my recommendation appointed Keeper of the Books at the Arsenal, which were returned to that Prince when he was still Monsieur. The Abbé Grozier was deeply learned with regard to China, its manners and customs; he made me heir to this knowledge at an age when it is difficult not to become a fanatic for the things we learn. At five-and-twenty I knew Chinese, and I confess I have never been able to check myself in an exclusive admiration for that nation, who conquered their conquerors, whose annals extend back indisputably to a period more remote than mythological or Biblical times, who by their immutable institutions have preserved the integrity of their empire, whose monuments are gigantic, whose administration is perfect, among whom revolutions are impossible, who have regarded ideal beauty as a barren element in art, who have carried luxury and industry to such a pitch that we cannot outdo them in anything, while they are our equals in things where we believe ourselves superior.

'Still, Monsieur, though I often make a jest of comparing China with the present condition of European states, I am not a Chinaman, I am a French gentleman. If you entertain any doubts as to the financial side of this undertaking, I can prove to you that at this moment we have two thousand five hundred subscribers to this work, which is literary, iconographical, statistical, and

religious; its importance has been generally appreciated; our subscribers belong to every nation in Europe, we have but twelve hundred in France. Our book will cost about three hundred francs, and the Comte de Nouvion will derive from it from six to seven thousand francs a year, for his comfort was the real motive of the undertaking. For my part, I aimed only at the possibility of affording my children some pleasures. The hundred thousand francs I have made, quite in spite of myself, will pay for their fencing lessons, horses, dress, and theatres, pay the masters who teach them accomplishments, procure them canvases to spoil, the books they may wish to buy, in short, all the little fancies which a father finds so much pleasure in gratifying. If I had been compelled to refuse these indulgences to my poor boys, who are so good and work so hard, the sacrifice I made to the honour of my name would have been doubly painful.

'In point of fact, the twelve years I have spent in retirement from the world to educate my children have led to my being completely forgotten at Court. I have given up the career of politics; I have lost my historical fortune, and all the distinctions which I might have acquired and bequeathed to my children; but our house will have lost nothing; my boys will be men of mark. Though I have missed the senatorship, they will win it nobly by devoting themselves to the affairs of the country, and doing such service as is not soon forgotten. While purifying the past record of my family, I have insured it a glorious future; and is not that to have achieved a noble task, though in secret and without glory?—And now, Monsieur, have you any other explanations to ask of me?'

At this instant the tramp of horses was heard in the courtyard.

'Here they are!' said the Marquis. In a moment the two lads, fashionably but plainly dressed, came into the

room, booted, spurred, and gloved, and flourishing their riding-whips. Their beaming faces brought in the freshness of the outer air; they were brilliant with health. They both grasped their father's hand, giving him a look, as friends do, a glance of unspoken affection, and then they bowed coldly to the lawyer. Popinot felt that it was quite unnecessary to question the Marquis as to his relations towards his sons.

'Have you enjoyed yourselves?' asked the Marquis.

'Yes, father; I knocked down six dolls in twelve shots at the first trial!' cried Camille.

'And where did you ride?'

'In the Bois; we saw my mother.'

'Did she stop?'

'We were riding so fast just then that I daresay she did not see us,' replied the young Count.

'But, then, why did you not go to speak to her?'

'I fancy I have noticed, father, that she does not care that we should speak to her in public,' said Clément, in an undertone. 'We are a little too big.'

The judge's hearing was keen enough to catch these words, which brought a cloud to the Marquis's brow. Popinot took pleasure in contemplating the picture of the father and his boys. His eyes went back with a sense of pathos to M. d'Espard's face; his features, his expression, and his manner all expressed honesty in its noblest aspect, intellectual and chivalrous honesty, nobility in all its beauty.

'You—you see, Monsieur,' said the Marquis, and his hesitation had returned, 'you see that Justice may look in—in here at any time—yes, at any time—here. If there is anybody crazy, it can only be the children—the children—who are a little crazy about their father, and the father who is very crazy about his children—but that sort of madness rings true.'

At this juncture Madame Jeanrenaud's voice was heard in the anteroom, and the good woman came

bustling in, in spite of the man-servant's remonstrances.

'I take no roundabout ways, I can tell you!' she exclaimed. 'Yes, Monsieur le Marquis, I want to speak to you, this very minute,' she went on, with a comprehensive bow to the company. 'By George, and I am too late as it is, since Monsieur the criminal Judge is before me.'

'Criminal!' cried the two boys.

'Good reason why I did not find you at your own house, since you are here. Well, well! the Law is always to the fore when there is mischief brewing.—I came, Monsieur le Marquis, to tell you that my son and I are of one mind to give you everything back, since our honour is threatened. My son and I, we had rather give you back everything than cause you the smallest trouble. My word, they must be as stupid as pans without handles to call you a lunatic——'

'A lunatic! My father?' exclaimed the boys, clinging to the Marquis. 'What is this?'

'Silence, Madame,' said Popinot.

'Children, leave us,' said the Marquis.

The two boys went into the garden without a word, but very much alarmed.

'Madame,' said the judge, 'the moneys paid to you by Monsieur le Marquis were legally due, though given to you in virtue of a very far-reaching theory of honesty. If all the people possessed of confiscated goods, by whatever cause, even if acquired by treachery, were compelled to make restitution every hundred and fifty years, there would be few legitimate owners in France. The possessions of Jacques Cœur enriched twenty noble families; the confiscations pronounced by the English to the advantage of their adherents at the time when they held a part of France made the fortune of several princely houses.

'Our law allows M. d'Espard to dispose of his income

without accounting for it, or suffering him to be accused of its misapplication. A Commission in Lunacy can only be granted when a man's actions are devoid of reason; but in this case, the remittances made to you have a reason based on the most sacred and most honourable motives. Hence you may keep it all without remorse, and leave the world to misinterpret a noble action. In Paris, the highest virtue is the object of the foulest calumny. It is, unfortunately, the present condition of society that makes the Marquis's actions sublime. For the honour of my country, I would that such deeds were regarded as a matter of course; but, as things are, I am forced by comparison to look upon M. d'Espard as a man to whom a crown should be awarded, rather than that he should be threatened with a Commission in Lunacy.

'In the course of a long professional career, I have seen and heard nothing which has touched me more deeply than that I have just seen and heard. But it is not extraordinary that virtue should wear its noblest aspect when it is practised by men of the highest class.

'Having heard me express myself in this way, I hope, Monsieur le Marquis, that you feel certain of my silence, and that you will not for a moment be uneasy as to the decision pronounced in the case—if it comes before the Court.'

'There, now! Well said,' cried Madame Jeanrenaud. 'That is something like a judge! Look here, my dear sir, I would hug you if I were not so ugly; you speak like a book.'

The Marquis held out his hand to Popinot, who gently pressed it with a look full of sympathetic comprehension at this great man in private life, and the Marquis responded with a pleasant smile. These two natures, both so large and full—one commonplace but divinely kind, the other lofty and sublime—had fallen into unison gently, without a jar, without a flash of passion, as

though two pure lights had been merged into one. The father of a whole district felt himself worthy to grasp the hand of this man who was doubly noble, and the Marquis felt in the depths of his soul an instinct that told him that the judge's hand was one of those from which the treasures of inexhaustible beneficence perennially flow.

'Monsieur le Marquis,' added Popinot, with a bow, 'I am happy to be able to tell you that, from the first words of this inquiry, I regarded my clerk as quite unnecessary.'

He went close to M. d'Espard, led him into the window-bay, and said: 'It is time that you should return home, Monsieur. I believe that Madame la Marquise has acted in this matter under an influence which you ought at once to counteract.'

Popinot withdrew; he looked back several times as he crossed the courtyard, touched by the recollection of the scene. It was one of those which take root in the memory to blossom again in certain hours when the soul seeks consolation.

'Those rooms would just suit me,' said he to himself as he reached home. 'If M. d'Espard leaves them, I will take up his lease.'

The next day, at about ten in the morning, Popinot, who had written out his report the previous evening, made his way to the Palais de Justice, intending to have prompt and righteous justice done. As he went into the robing-room to put on his gown and bands, the usher told him that the President of his Court begged him to attend in his private room, where he was waiting for him. Popinot forthwith obeyed.

'Good-morning, my dear Popinot,' said the President, 'I have been waiting for you.'

'Why, Monsieur le President, is anything wrong?'

'A mere silly trifle,' said the President. 'The Keeper of the Seals, with whom I had the honour of dining yesterday, led me apart into a corner. He had heard

that you had been to tea with Madame d'Espard, in whose case you were employed to make inquiries. He gave me to understand that it would be as well that you should not sit on this case——'

'But, Monsieur le Président, I can prove that I left Madame d'Espard's house at the moment when tea was brought in. And my conscience——'

'Yes, yes; the whole Bench, the two Courts, all the profession know you. I need not repeat what I said about you to his Eminence; but, you know, "Cæsar's wife must not be suspected." So we shall not make this foolish trifle a matter of discipline, but only of the proprieties. Between ourselves, it is not on your account, but on that of the Bench.'

'But, Monsieur, if you only knew the kind of woman——' said the judge, trying to pull his report out of his pocket.

'I am perfectly certain that you have proceeded in this matter with the strictest independence of judgment. I myself, in the provinces, have often taken more than a cup of tea with the people I had to try; but the fact that the Keeper of the Seals should have mentioned it and that you might be talked about, is enough to make the Court avoid any discussion of the matter. Any conflict with public opinion must always be dangerous for a constitutional body, even when the right is on its side against the public, because their weapons are not equal. Journalism may say or suppose anything, and our dignity forbids us even to reply. In fact, I have spoken of the matter to your President, and M. Camusot has been appointed in your place on your retirement, which you will signify. It is a family matter, so to speak. And I now beg you to signify your retirement from the case as a personal favour. To make up, you will get the Cross of the Legion of Honour, which has so long been due to you. I make that my business.'

When he saw M. Camusot, a judge recently called to

Paris from a provincial Court of the same class, as he went forward bowing to the Judge and the President, Popinot could not suppress an ironical smile. This pale, fair young man, full of covert ambition, looked ready to hang and unhang, at the pleasure of any earthly king, the innocent and the guilty alike, and to follow the example of a Laubardemont rather than that of a Molé.

Popinot withdrew with a bow; he scorned to deny the lying accusation that had been brought against him.'

PARIS, *February* 1836.

PIERRE GRASSOU

To Lieutenant-Colonel Périollas (of the Artillery) as a proof of the author's affection and esteem.

De Balzac.

On every occasion when you have gone seriously to study the Exhibition of works in sculpture and painting, such as it has been since the Revolution of 1830, have you not been seized by a feeling of discomfort, boredom, and melancholy at the sight of the long, over-filled galleries? Since 1830 the Salon has ceased to exist. Once more the Louvre has been taken by storm by the mob of artists, and they have kept possession. Formerly, when the Salon gave us a choice collection of works of art, it secured the greatest honours for the examples exhibited there. Among the two hundred selected pictures the public chose again; a crown was awarded to the masterpieces by unknown hands. Impassioned discussions arose as to the merits of a painting. The abuse heaped on Delacroix and on Ingres were not of less service to them than the praises and fanaticism of their adherents.

In our day neither the crowd nor the critic can be vehement over the objects in this bazaar. Being compelled to make the selection which was formerly undertaken by the examining jury, their attention is exhausted by the effort; and by the time it is finished the Exhibition closes.

Until 1817 the pictures accepted never extended beyond the two first columns of the long gallery containing the works of the old masters, and this year they filled the whole of this space, to the great surprise of the public. Historical painting, *genre*, easel pictures, landscape, flowers, animals, and water-colour painting,—each of these eight classes could never yield more than twenty pictures worthy of the eye of the public, who cannot give attention to a larger collection of pictures.

The more the number of artists increases, the more exacting should the jury of selection become. All was lost as soon as the Salon encroached further on the gallery. The Salon should have been kept within fixed and restricted limits, inflexibly defined, where each class might exhibit its best works. The experience of ten years has proved the excellence of the old rules. Instead of a tourney, you now have a riot; instead of a glorious exhibition, you have a medley bazaar; instead of a selection, you have everything at once. What is the result? A great artist is swamped. The *Turkish Café*, the *Children at the Well*, the *Torture by Hooks*, and the *Joseph* by Decamps would have done more for his glory if exhibited, all four, in the great room with the hundred other good pictures of the year, than his twenty canvases buried among three thousand paintings, and dispersed among six galleries.

With strange perversity, since the doors have been thrown open to all, there has been much talk of unappreciated genius. When, twelve years before, the *Courtesan*, by Ingres, and Sigalon's pictures, Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*, Delacroix's *Massacre of Scio*, and Eugène Deveria's *Baptism of Henri IV.*—accepted, as they were, by yet more famous men, who were taxed with jealousy—revealed to the world, notwithstanding the carping of critics, the existence of youthful and ardent painters, not a complaint was ever heard. But now, when the veriest dauber of canvas can display his works,

we hear of nothing but misunderstood talent. Where there is no longer any judgment, nothing is judged. Our artists, do what they may, will come back to the ordeal of selection which recommends their work to the admiration of the public for whom they toil. Without the choice exercised by the Academy, there will be no Salon; and without the Salon, art may perish.

Since the catalogue has grown to be a fat volume, many names are found there which remain obscure, notwithstanding the list of ten or twelve pictures that follows them. Among these names, the least known of all perhaps is that of an artist named Pierre Grassou, a native of Fougères, and called, for shortness, Fougères in the artist world—a name which nowadays fills so much space on the page, and which has suggested the bitter reflections introducing this sketch of his life, and applicable to some other members of the artist tribe.

In 1832 Fougères was living in the Rue de Navarin, on the fourth floor of one of those tall, narrow houses that are like the obelisk of Luxor, which have a passage and a dark, narrow staircase with dangerous turnings, which are not wide enough for more than three windows on each floor, and have a courtyard, or, to be exact, a square well at the back. Above the three or four rooms inhabited by Fougères was his studio, looking out over Montmartre. The studio, painted brick red; the floor, carefully stained brown and polished; each chair provided with a square, bordered mat; the sofa, plain enough, but as clean as that in a tradeswoman's bedroom, everything betrayed the petty existence of a narrow mind and the carefulness of a poor man. There was a closet for keeping the studio properties in, a breakfast table, a sideboard, a desk, and the various objects necessary for painting, all clean and in order. The stove, too, had the benefit of this Dutch neatness, which was all the more conspicuous because the pure and steady northern sky flooded the back room with clear, cold light. Fougères, a mere

painter of *genre*, had no need for the huge machinery which ruins historical painters; he had never discerned in himself faculties competent to venture on the higher walks of art, and was still content with small easels.

In the beginning of the month of December of that year, the season when Paris Philistines are periodically attacked by the burlesque idea of perpetuating their faces —in themselves a sufficient burden—Pierre Grassou, having risen early, was setting his palette, lighting his stove, eating a roll soaked in milk, and waiting to work till his window panes should have thawed enough to let daylight in. The weather was dry and fine. At this instant, the painter, eating with the patient, resigned look that tells so much, recognised the footfall of a man who had had the influence over his life which people of his class have in the career of most artists—Elias Magus, a picture dealer, an usurer in canvas. And, in fact, Elias Magus came in, at the moment when the painter was about to begin work in his elaborately clean studio.

'How is yourself, old rascal?' said the painter.

Fougères had won the Cross; Elias bought his pictures for two or three hundred francs, and gave himself the most artistic airs.

'Business is bad,' replied Elias. 'You all are such lords; you talk of two hundred francs as soon as you have six sous worth of paint on the canvas.—But you are a very good fellow, you are. You are a man of method, and I have come to bring you a good job.'

'*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*,' said Fougères. 'Do you know Latin?'

'No.'

'Well, that means that the Greeks did not offer a bit of good business to the Trojans without making something out of it. In those days they used to say, "Take my horse." Nowadays we say, "Take my trash!"—Well, what do you want, Ulysses-Lagingeole-Elias-Magus?'

This speech shows the degree of sweetness and wit which Fougères could put into what painters call studio-chaff.

'I don't say that you will not have to paint me two pictures for nothing.'

'Oh! oh!'

'I leave it to you; I do not ask for them. You are an honest artist.'

'Indeed?'

'Well. I am bringing you a father, a mother, and an only daughter.'

'All unique specimens?'

'My word, yes, indeed!—to have their portraits painted. The worthy folks, crazy about art, have never dared venture into a studio. The daughter will have a hundred thousand francs on her marriage. You may do well to paint such people. Family portraits for yourself, who knows?'

The old German image, who passes muster as a man, and is called Elias Magus, broke off to laugh a dry cackle that horrified the painter. He felt as if he had heard Mephistopheles talking of marriage.

'The portraits are to be five hundred francs apiece; you may give me three pictures.'

'Right you are!' said Fougères cheerfully.

'And if you marry the daughter, you will not forget me——'

'Marry? I!' cried Pierre Grassou; 'I, who am used to have a bed to myself, to get up early, whose life is all laid out——'

'A hundred thousand francs,' said Magus, 'and a sweet girl, full of golden lights like a Titian!'

'And what position do these people hold?'

'Retired merchants: in love with the arts at the present moment; they have a country house at Ville-d'Avray, and ten or twelve thousand francs a year.'

'What was their business?'

'Bottles.'

'Don't speak that word; I fancy I hear corks being cut, and it sets my teeth on edge.'

'Well; am I to bring them?'

'Three portraits; I will send them to the Salon; I might go in for portrait-painting.—All right, yes.'

And old Elias went downstairs to fetch the Vervelle family.

To understand exactly what the outcome of such a proposal would be on the painter, and the effect produced on him by Monsieur and Madame Vervelle, graced by the addition of their only daughter, it is necessary to glance for a moment at the past life of Pierre Grassou of Fougères. As a pupil, he had learned to draw of Servin, who was regarded in the academical world as a great draughtsman. He afterwards worked under Schinner, to discover the secrets of the powerful and splendid colouring that characterises that master. The master and his disciples had kept the secrets; Pierre had discovered nothing. From thence Fougères had gone to Sommervieux's studio to familiarise himself with that part of art which is called composition; but composition was shy, and held aloof from him. Then he had tried to steal from Granet and Drolling the mystery of their luminous interiors; the two masters had not allowed him to rob them. Finally, Fougères had finished his training under Duval-Lecamus.

Through all these studies and various transformations, Fougères' quiet, steady habits had furnished materials for mockery in every studio where he had worked; but he everywhere disarmed his comrades by his diffidence and his lamb-like patience and meekness. The masters had no sympathy with this worthy lad; masters like brilliant fellows, eccentric spirits, farcical and fiery, or gloomy and deeply meditative, promising future talent. Everything in Fougères proclaimed his mediocrity. His nickname of Fougères—the name of the

painter in the play by *Fabre d'Eglantine*—was the pretext for endless affronts, but by force of circumstances he was saddled with the name of the town 'where he first saw the light.'

Grassou de Fougères matched his name. Plump and rather short, he had a dull complexion, brown eyes, black hair, a thick prominent nose, a rather wide mouth, and long ears. His placid, gentle, resigned expression did little to improve these features of a face that was full of health but not of movement. He could never suffer from the flow of blood, the vehemence of thought, or the spirit of comedy by which a great artist is to be known. This youth, born to be a virtuous citizen, had come from his provincial home to serve as shop-clerk to a colour-man, a native of Mayenne, distantly related to the d'Orgemonts, and he had made himself a painter by the sheer obstinacy which is the backbone of the Breton character. What he had endured, and the way in which he lived during his period of study, God alone knows. He suffered as much as great men suffer when they are haunted by want, and hunted down like wild beasts by the pack of inferior souls, and the whole army of vanity thirsting for revenge.

As soon as he thought himself strong enough for flight on his own wings, he took a studio at the top of the Rue des Martyrs, and there he began to work. He first sent in a picture in 1819. The picture he offered the jury for their exhibition at the Louvre represented a Village Wedding, a laborious imitation of Greuze's picture. It was refused. When Fougères heard the fatal sentence, he did not fly into those furies or fits of epileptic vanity to which proud spirits are liable, and which sometimes end in a challenge sent to the President or the Secretary, or in threats of assassination. Fougères calmly received his picture back, wrapped it in a handkerchief, and brought it home to his studio, swearing that he would yet become a great painter.

He placed the canvas on the easel and went to call on his old master, a man of immense talent—Schinner—a gentle and patient artist, whose success had been brilliant at the last Salon. He begged him to come and criticise the rejected work. The great painter left everything and went. When poor Fougères had placed him in front of the painting, Schinner at the first glance took Fougères by the hand—

'You are a capital good fellow; you have a heart of gold, it will not be fair to deceive you. Listen; you have kept all the promise you showed at the studio. When a man has such stuff as that at the end of his brush, my good fellow, he had better leave his paints in Brullon's shop, and not deprive others of the canvas. Get home early, pull on your cotton night-cap, be in bed by nine; and to-morrow morning at ten o'clock go to some office and ask for work, and have done with art.'

'My good friend,' said Fougerès, 'my picture is condemned already. It is not a verdict that I want, but the reasons for it.'

'Well, then, your tone is grey and cold; you see nature through a crape veil; your drawing is heavy and clumsy; your composition is borrowed from Greuze, who only redeemed his faults by qualities which you have not.'

As he pointed out the faults of the picture, Schinner saw in Fougères' face so deep an expression of grief that he took him away to dine, and tried to comfort him.

Next day, by seven in the morning, Fougères, before his easel, was working over the condemned canvas; he warmed up the colour, made the corrections suggested by Schinner, and touched up the figures. Then, sick of such patching, he took it to Elias Magus. Elias Magus, being a sort of Dutch-Belgian-Fleming, had three reasons for being what he was—miserly and rich.

He had lately come from Bordeaux, and was starting in business in Paris as a picture-dealer; he lived on the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle. Fougères, who trusted to his palette to take him to the baker's, bravely ate bread and walnuts, or bread and milk, or bread and cherries, or bread and cheese, according to the season. Elias Magus, to whom Pierre offered his first picture, eyed it for a long time, and then gave him fifteen francs.

'Taking fifteen francs a year and spending a thousand, I shall go fast and far,' said Fougères, smiling.

Elias Magus gave a shrug and bit his thumb at the thought that he might have had the picture for five francs. Every morning, for some days, Fougères went down the Rue des Martyrs, lost himself in the crowd on the Boulevard opposite Magus' shop, and fixed his eyes on his picture—which did not attract the gaze of the passers-by. Towards the end of the week the picture disappeared. Fougères wandered up the boulevard towards the picture-dealer's shop with an affectation of amusing himself. The Jew was standing in the doorway.

'Well, you have sold my picture?'

'There it is,' said Magus. 'I am having it framed to show to some man who fancies himself knowing in paintings.'

Fougères did not dare come along the boulevard any more. He began a new picture; for two months he laboured at it, feeding like a mouse and working like a galley-slave. One evening he walked out on the boulevard; his feet carried him involuntarily to Magus' shop; he could nowhere see his picture.

'I have sold your picture,' said the dealer to the artist.

'For how much?'

'I got my money back with a little interest. Paint me some Flemish interiors, an Anatomy lecture, a landscape; I will take them of you,' said Elias.

Fougères could have hugged Magus in his arms; he

looked upon him as a father. He went home with joy in his heart. Then Schinner, the great Schinner, was mistaken! In that vast city of Paris there were some hearts that beat in unison with that of Grassou; his talent was discerned and appreciated!

The poor fellow, at seven-and-twenty, had the artlessness of a boy of sixteen. Any one else, one of your distrustful, suspicious artists, would have noticed Elias' diabolical expression, have seen the quiver of his beard, the ironical curl of his moustache, the action of his shoulders, all betraying the satisfaction of Walter Scott's Jew cheating a Christian. Fougères paraded the boulevards with a joy that gave his face an expression of pride. He looked like a schoolboy protecting a woman. He met Joseph Bridau, one of his fellow-students, one of those eccentric men of genius who are predestined to glory and disaster. Joseph Bridau, having a few sous in his pocket, as he expressed it, took Fougères to the opera. Fougères did not see the ballet, did not hear the music; he was imagining pictures, he was painting.

He left Joseph half-way through the evening, and ran home to make sketches by lamp-light; he invented thirty pictures, full of reminiscences, and believed himself a genius. Next day he bought some colours and canvases of various sizes; he spread out some bread and some cheese on his table; he got some water in a jug, and a store of wood for his stove; then, to use the studio phrase, he pegged away at his painting; he employed a few models, and Magus lent him draperies. After two months of seclusion, the Breton had finished four pictures. He again asked Schinner's advice, with the addition of Joseph Bridau's. The two painters found these works to be a servile imitation of Dutch landscapes, of Metzu's interiors, and the fourth was a version of Rembrandt's *Anatomy lecture*.

'Always imitations!' said Schinner. 'Ah, Fougères would find it hard to be original.'

'You ought to turn your attention to something else than painting,' said Bridau.

'To what?' said Fougères.

'Go in for literature.'

Fougères bent his head as sheep do before rain. Then he asked and got some practical advice, touched up his paintings, and carried them to Elias. Elias gave him twenty-five francs for each. At this price Fougères made nothing, but, thanks to his abstemiousness, he lost nothing. He took some walks to see what became of his pictures, and had a singular hallucination. His works, so firmly painted, so neat, as hard as tin-plate iron, and as shining as painting on porcelain, seemed to be covered with a fog; they looked quite like old masters.

Elias had just gone out; Fougères could obtain no information as to this phenomenon. He thought his eyes deceived him.

The painter went home to his studio to make new old masters. After seven years of constant work, Fougères was able to compose and paint fairly good pictures. He did as well as all the other artists of the second class. Elias bought and sold all the poor Breton's pictures, while he laboriously earned a hundred louis a year, and did not spend more than twelve hundred francs.

At the Exhibition of 1829, Léon de Lora, Schinner and Bridau, who all three filled a large space, and were at the head of the new movement in art, took pity on their old comrade's perseverance and poverty; they managed to get a picture by Fougères accepted and hung in the great room. This work, of thrilling interest, recalling Vigneron in its sentiment, and Dubufe's early manner in its execution, represented a young man in prison having the back of his head shaved. On one side stood a priest, on the other a young woman in tears. A lawyer's clerk was reading an official document. On a wretched table stood a meal which no one had eaten.

The light came in through the bars of a high window. It was enough to make the good folks shudder, and they shuddered.

Fougères had borrowed directly from Gerard Dow's masterpiece: he had turned the group of the *Dropsical Woman* towards the window instead of facing the spectator. He had put the condemned prisoner in the place of the dying woman—the same pallor, the same look, the same appeal to heaven. Instead of the Dutch physician, there was the rigid official figure of the clerk dressed in black; but he had added an old woman by the side of Gerard Dow's young girl. The cruelly good-humoured face of the executioner crowned the group. This plagiarism, skilfully concealed, was not recognised.

The catalogue contained these words:—

510, Grassou de Fougères (Pierre), Rue de Navarin, 2.
The Chouan's Toilet; condemned to Death, 1809.

Though quite mediocre, the picture had a prodigious success, for it reminded the spectators of the affair of the robbers—known as the *Chauffeurs*—of Mortagne. A crowd collected every day in front of the picture, which became the fashion, and Charles x. stopped to look at it. Madame, having heard of the poor Breton's patient life, grew enthusiastic about him. The Duc d'Orléans asked the price of the painting. The priests told Madame the Dauphiness that the work was full of pious feeling; it had no doubt a very satisfactory suggestion of religion. Monseigneur the Dauphin admired the dust on the window panes, a stupid, dull mistake, for what Fougères had intended was a greenish tone, which spoke of damp at the bottom of the walls. Madame bought the picture for a thousand francs, and the Dauphin gave a commission for another. Charles x. bestowed the Cross on this son of a peasant who had fought for the Royal Cause in 1799; Joseph Bridau, a great painter, was not decorated. The Minister of the Interior ordered two

sacred pictures for the church at Fougères. This Salon was to Pierre Grassou fortune, glory, a future, and life.

To invent in any kind is to die by inches; to copy is to live. Having at last discovered a vein full of gold, Grassou of Fougères practised that part of this barbarous maxim to which the world owes the atrocious mediocrity whose duty it is to elect its superiors in every class of society, but which naturally elects itself, and wages pitiless war against all real talent. The principle of election universally applied is a bad one; France will get over it. At the same time, Fougères was so gentle and kind that his modesty, his simplicity, and his astonishment silenced recriminations and envy. Then, again, he had on his side all the successful Grassous, representing all the Grassous to come. Some people, touched by the energy of a man whom nothing had discouraged, spoke of Domenichino, and said, 'Hard work in the arts must be rewarded. Grassou has earned his success. He has been pegging at it for ten years, poor old fellow!'

This exclamation, 'poor old fellow!' counted for a great deal in the support and congratulations the painter received. Pity elevates as many second-rate talents as envy runs down great artists. The newspapers had not been sparing of criticism, but the Chevalier Fougères took it all as he took his friend's advice, with angelic patience. Rich now, with fifteen thousand francs very hardly earned, he furnished his rooms and his studio in the Rue de Navarin, he painted the picture ordered by Monseigneur the Dauphin, and the two sacred works commanded by the Minister, finishing them to the day, with a punctuality perfectly distracting to the cashier of the Ministry, accustomed to quite other ways. But note the good luck of methodical people! If he had delayed, Grassou, overtaken by the revolution of July, would never have been paid.

By the time he was seven-and-thirty Fougères had manufactured for Elias Magus about two hundred pictures,

all perfectly unknown, but by which he had gained with practice that satisfactory handling, that pitch of dexterity at which an artist shrugs his shoulders, and which is dear to the Philistine. Fougères was loved by his friends for his rectitude of mind and steadfastness of feeling, for his perfectly obliging temper and loyal spirit; though they had no respect for his palette, they were attached to the man who held it.

'What a pity that Fougères should indulge in the vice of painting!' his friends would say.

Grassou, however, could give sound advice, like the newspaper writers, who are incapable of producing a book, but who know full well where a book is faulty. But there was a difference between Fougères and these literary critics; he was keenly alive to every beauty, he acknowledged it, and his advice was stamped with a sense of justice which made his strictures acceptable.

After the revolution of July Fougères sent in ten or more paintings to every exhibition, of which the jury would accept four or five. He lived with the strictest economy, and his whole household consisted of a woman to manage the housework. His amusements lay solely in visits to his friends, and in going to see works of art; he treated himself to some little tours in France, and dreamed of seeking inspiration in Switzerland. This wretched artist was a good citizen; he served in the Guard, turned out for inspection, and paid his rent and bills with the vulgarest punctuality. Having lived in hard work and penury, he had never had time to be in love. A bachelor and poor, up to the present day he had had no wish to complicate his simple existence.

Having no idea of any way of increasing his wealth, he took his savings and his earnings every quarter to his notary, Cardot. When the notary had a thousand crowns in hand, he invested them in a first mortgage, with substitution in favour of the wife's rights if the borrower should marry, or in favour of the seller if the borrower

should wish to pay it off. The notary drew the interest and added it to the sums deposited by Grassou de Fougères. The painter looked forward to the happy day when his investments should reach the imposing figure of two thousand francs a year, when he would indulge in the *otium cum dignitate* of an artist and paint pictures—oh! but such pictures! Real pictures, finished pictures — something like, clipping, stunning! His fondest hope, his dream of joy, the climax of all his hopes—would you like to know it? It was to be elected to the Institute and wear the rosette of the officers of the Legion of Honour! To sit by Schinner and Léon de Lora! To get into the Academy before Bridau! To have a rosette in his button-hole.—What a vision! Only your commonplace mind can think of everything.

On hearing several footsteps on the stairs, Fougères pushed his fingers through his top-knot of hair, buttoned his bottle-green waistcoat, and was not a little surprised at the entrance of a face of the kind known in the studio as a *melon*. This fruit was perched on a pumpkin dressed in blue cloth, and graced with a dangling bunch of jingling seals. The melon snorted like a porpoise, the pumpkin walked on turnips incorrectly called legs. A real artist would at once have sketched such a caricature of the bottle merchant and then have shown him out, saying that he did not paint vegetables. Fougères looked at his customer without laughing, for M. Vervelle wore in his shirt-front a diamond worth a thousand crowns. Fougères glanced at Magus, and said in the studio slang of the day, 'A fat job,' meaning that the worthy was rich.

M. Vervelle heard it and frowned. He brought in his train some other vegetable combinations in the persons of his wife and daughter. The wife had in her face a fine mahogany tone; she looked like a cocoa-nut surmounted by a head and tightened in with a belt; she

twirled round on her feet; her dress was yellow, with black stripes. She proudly displayed absurd mittens on a pair of hands as swollen as a glover's sign. The feathers of a first-class funeral waved over a coal-scuttle bonnet; lace frills covered a figure as round behind as before, thus the spherical form of the cocoa-nut was perfect. Her feet, which a painter would have termed hoofs, had a garnish of half-an-inch of fat projecting beyond her patent-leather shoes. How had her feet been got into the shoes? Who can tell?

Behind her came a young asparagus shoot, green and yellow as to her dress, with a small head covered with hair in flat braids of a carroty yellow which a Roman would have adored, thread-paper arms, a fairly white but freckled skin, large innocent eyes, with colourless lashes and faintly marked eyebrows, a Leghorn straw hat, trimmed with a couple of honest white satin bows, and bound with white satin, virtuously red hands, and feet like her mother's.

These three persons, as they looked round the studio, had a look of beatitude which showed a highly respectable enthusiasm for art.

'And it is you, sir, who are going to take our likenesses?' said the father, assuming a little dashing air.

'Yes, sir,' replied Grassou.

'Vervelle, he has the Cross,' said the wife to her husband in a whisper while the painter's back was turned.

'Should I have our portraits painted by an artist who was not "decorated"?' retorted the bottle-merchant.

Elias Magus bowed to the Vervelle family and went away. Grassou followed him on to the landing.

'Who but you would have discovered such a set of phizzes?'

'A hundred thousand francs in settlement!'

'Yes, but what a family!'

'And three hundred thousand francs in expectations,

a house in the Rue Boucherat, and a country place at Ville d'Avray.'

'Boucherat, bottles, bumpkins, and bounce!' said the painter.

'You will be out of want for the rest of your days,' said Elias.

This idea flashed into Pierre Grassou's brain as the morning light had broken on his attic. As he placed the young lady's father in position, he thought him really good-looking, and admired his face with its strong purple tones. The mother and daughter hovered round the painter, wondering at all his preparations; to them he seemed a god. This visible adoration was pleasing to Fougères. The golden calf cast its fantastic reflection on this family.

'You must earn enormous sums; but you spend it as fast as you get it?' said the mother.

'No, Madame,' replied the painter, 'I do not spend. I have not means to amuse myself. My notary invests my money; he knows what I have, and when once the money is in his hands I think no more about it.'

'And I have always been told that painters were a thriftless set!' said father Vervelle.

'Who is your notary, if it is not too great a liberty?' said Madame Vervelle.

'A capital fellow all round—Cardot.'

'Lord! lord! Isn't that funny now!' said Vervelle. 'Why, Cardot is ours too.'

'Do not move,' said the painter.

'Sit still, do, Anténor,' said his wife; 'you will put the gentleman out; if you could see him working you would understand.'

'Gracious me, why did you never have me taught art?' said Mademoiselle Vervelle to her parents.

'Virginie!' exclaimed her mother, 'there are certain things a young lady cannot learn. When you are married—well and good. Till then be content.'

In the course of this first sitting the Vervelle family became almost intimate with the worthy artist. They were to come again two days after. As they left, the father and mother desired Virginie to go first; but in spite of the distance between them, she heard these words, of which the meaning must have roused her curiosity:—

'*Décoré*—thirty-seven—an artist who gets commissions, and places his money in our notary's hands. We will consult Cardot. Madame de Fougères, heh! not a bad name! He does not look like a bad fellow! A man of business, you would say? But so long as a merchant has not retired from business, you can never tell what your daughter may come to; while an artist who saves.—And then we are fond of art.—Well, well!——'

While the Vervelles were discussing him, Pierre Grassou was thinking of the Vervelles. He found it impossible to remain quietly in his studio; he walked up and down the boulevard, looking at every red-haired woman who went by! He argued with himself in the strangest way: Gold was the most splendid of the metals, yellow stood for gold; the ancient Romans liked red-haired women, and he became a Roman, and so forth. After being married two years, what does a man care for his wife's complexion? Beauty fades — but ugliness remains! Money is half of happiness. That evening, when he went to bed, the painter had already persuaded himself that Virginie Vervelle was charming.

When the trio walked in on the day fixed for the second sitting, the artist received them with an amiable smile. The rogue had shaved, had put on a clean white shirt; he had chosen a becoming pair of trousers, and red slippers with Turkish toes. The family responded with a smile as flattering as the artist's; Virginie turned as red as her hair, dropped her eyes, and turned away her head, looking at the studies. Pierre Grassou thought these little affectations quite bewitching. Virginie was

graceful; happily, she was like neither father nor mother. But whom was she like?

'Ah, I see,' said he to himself; 'the mother has had an eye to business.'

During the sitting there was a war of wits between the family and the painter, who was so audacious as to say that father Vervelle was witty. After this piece of flattery the family took possession of the painter's heart in double quick time; he gave one of his drawings to Virginie, and a sketch to her mother.

'For nothing?' they asked.

Pierre Grassou could not help smiling.

'You must not give your works away like this; they are money,' said Vervelle.

At the third sitting old Vervelle spoke of a fine collection of pictures he had in his country house at Ville d'Avray—Rubens, Gerard Dow, Mieris, Terburg, Rembrandt, a Titian, Paul Potter, etc.

'M. Vervelle has been frightfully extravagant,' said Madame Vervelle pompously. 'He has a hundred thousand francs' worth of pictures.'

'I am fond of the arts,' said the bottle-merchant.

When Madame Vervelle's portrait was begun, that of her husband was nearly finished. The enthusiasm of the family now knew no bounds. The notary had praised the artist in the highest terms. Pierre Grassou was in his opinion the best fellow on earth, one of the steadiest of artists, who had indeed saved thirty-six thousand francs; his days of poverty were past, he was making ten thousand francs a year, he was reinvesting his interest, and he was incapable of making a woman unhappy. This last sentence was of great weight in the scale. The friends of the family heard nothing talked of but the celebrated Fougères.

By the time Fougères began the portrait of Virginie he was already the son-in-law elect of the Vervelle couple. The trio expanded in this studio, which they

had begun to regard as a home; there was an inexplicable attraction to them in this cleaned, cared-for, neat, artistic spot. *Abyssus abyssum*, like to like.

Towards the end of the sitting the stairs were shaken, the door was flung open, and in came Joseph Bridau; he rode the whirlwind, his hair was flying; in he came with his broad, deeply-seamed face, shot lightning glances all round the room, and came suddenly up to Grassou, pulling his coat across the gastric region, and trying to button it, but in vain, for the button mould had escaped from its cloth cover.

'Times are bad,' he said to Grassou.

'Hah?'

'The duns are at my heels.—Hallo! are you painting that sort of thing?'

'Hold your tongue!'

'To be sure——'

The Vervelle family, excessively taken aback by this apparition, turned from the usual red to the cherry scarlet of a fierce fire.

'It pays,' said Joseph. 'Have you any shot in your locker?'

'Do you want much?'

'A five hundred franc note. . . . There is a party after me of the bloodhound kind, who, when once they have set their teeth, do not let go without having the piece out. What a set!'

'I will give you a line to my notary——'

'What! you have a notary?'

'Yes.'

'Then that accounts for your still painting cheeks rose-pink, only fit for a hairdresser's doll!'

Grassou could not help reddening, for Virginie was sitting to him.

'Paint nature as it is,' the great painter went on. 'Mademoiselle is red-haired. Well, is that a deadly sin? Everything is fine in painting. Squeeze me out some

cinnabar, warm up those cheeks, give me those little brown freckles, butter your canvas boldly! Do you want to do better than Nature?'

'Here,' said Fougères, 'take my place while I write.'

Vervelle waddled to the writing-table and spoke in Grassou's ear.

'That interfering muddler will spoil it,' said the bottle-merchant.

'If he would paint your Virginie's portrait, it would be worth a thousand of mine,' replied Fougères indignantly.

On hearing this, the goodman quietly beat a retreat to join his wife, who sat bewildered at the invasion of this wild beast, and not at all happy at seeing him co-operating in her daughter's portrait.

'There, carry out those hints,' said Bridau, returning the palette, and taking the note. 'I will not thank you.—I can get back to D'Arthez' château; I am painting a dining-room for him, and Léon de Lora is doing panels over the doors—masterpieces. Come and see us!'

He went off without bowing even, so sick was he of looking at Virginie.

'Who is that man?' asked Madame Vervelle.

'A great artist,' replied Grassou.

There was a moment's silence.

'Are you quite sure,' said Virginie, 'that he has brought no ill-luck to my portrait? . . . He frightened me.'

'He has only improved it,' said Grassou.

'If he is a great artist, I prefer a great artist like you,' said Madame de Vervelle.

'Oh, mamma, Monsieur Fougères is a much greater artist. He will take me full length,' remarked Virginie.

The eccentricities of genius had scared these steady-going Philistines.

The year had now reached that pleasant autumn season prettily called Saint-Martin's summer. It was with the shyness of a neophyte in the presence of a man

of genius that Vervelle ventured to invite Grassou to spend the following Sunday at his country-house. He knew how little attraction a *bourgeois* family could offer to an artist.

'You artists,' said he, 'must have excitement, fine scenes, and clever company. But I can give you some good wine, and I rely on my pictures to make up for the dulness an artist like you must feel among trades-folks.'

This worship, which greatly soothed his vanity, delighted poor Pierre Grassou, who was little used to such compliments. This worthy artist, this ignominious mediocrity, this heart of gold, this loyal soul, this blundering draughtsman, this best of good fellows, displaying the Cross of the Royal Order of the Legion of Honour, got himself up with care to go and enjoy the last fine days of the year at Ville-d'Avray. The painter arrived unpretentiously by the public conveyance, and could not help admiring the bottle-merchant's handsome residence placed in the midst of a park of about five acres, at the top of the hill, and the best point of view. To marry Virginie meant owning this fine house some day!

He was received by the Vervelles with an enthusiasm, a delight, a genuine heartiness, a simple, commonplace stupidity that overpowered him. It was a day of triumph. The future son-in-law was taken to walk along the nankeen-coloured paths, which had been raked, as was due, for a great man. The very trees looked as if they had been brushed and combed, the lawns were mown. The pure country air diluted kitchen odours of the most comforting character. Everything in the house proclaimed, 'We have a great artist here!' Little father Vervelle rolled about his paddock like an apple, the daughter wriggled after him like an eel, and the mother followed with great dignity. For seven hours these three beings never released Grassou.

After a dinner, of which the length matched the splendour, Monsieur and Madame Vervelle came to their grand surprise—the opening of the picture gallery, lighted up by lamps carefully arranged for effect. Three neighbours, all retired business men, an uncle from whom they had expectations, invited in honour of the great artist, an old Aunt Vervelle, and the other guests followed Grassou into the gallery, all curious to hear his opinion of little Daddy Vervelle's famous collection, for he overpowered them by the fabulous value of his pictures. The bottle-merchant seemed to wish to vie with King Louis-Philippe and the galleries of Versailles.

The pictures, splendidly framed, bore tickets, on which might be read in black letters on a gold label:—

RUBENS

A Dance of Fauns and Nymphs

REMBRANDT

Interior of a Dissecting-room

Doctor Tromp giving a Lesson to his Pupils

There were a hundred and fifty pictures, all varnished and dusted; a few had green curtains over them, not to be raised in the presence of the young person.

The artist stood with limp arms and a gaping mouth, without a word on his lips, as he recognised in this gallery half his own works; he, He was Rubens, Paul Potter, Mieris, Metzu, Gerard Dow! He alone was twenty great masters!

'What is the matter? you look pale.'

'Daughter, a glass of water!' cried Madame Vervelle.

The painter took the old man by the button of his coat and led him into a corner, under pretence of examining a Murillo.—Spanish pictures were then the fashion.

'You bought your pictures of Elias Magus?' said he.

'Yes. All original works.'

'Between ourselves, what did he make you pay for those I will point out to you?'

The couple went round the gallery. The guests were amazed at the solemnity with which the artist, following his host, examined all these masterpieces.

'Three thousand francs!' exclaimed Vervelle in an undertone, as he came to the last. 'But I tell you forty thousand francs!'

'Forty thousand francs for a Titian!' said the artist aloud; 'why, it is dirt-cheap!'

'When I told you I had a hundred thousand crowns' worth of pictures——' exclaimed Vervelle.

'I painted every one of those pictures,' said Pierre Grassou in his ear; 'and I did not get more than ten thousand francs for the whole lot.'

'Prove it,' replied the bottle-merchant, 'and I will double my daughter's settlements; for in that case you are Rubens, Rembrandt, Terburg, Titian!'

'And Magus is something like a picture-dealer!' added the painter, who could account for the antique look of the pictures, and the practical end of the subjects ordered by the dealer.

Far from falling in his admirer's estimation, M. de Fougères—for so the family insisted on calling Pierre Grassou—rose so high that he painted his family for nothing, and of course presented the portraits to his father-in-law, his mother-in-law, and his wife.

Pierre Grassou, who never misses a single exhibition, is now regarded in the Philistine world as a very good portrait-painter. He earns about twelve thousand francs a year, and spoils about five hundred francs' worth of canvas. His wife had six thousand francs a year on her marriage, and they live with her parents. The Vervelles and the Grassous, who get on perfectly well together,

keep a carriage, and are the happiest people on earth. Pierre Grassou moves in a commonplace circle, where he is considered one of the greatest artists of the period. Not a family portrait is ordered between the Barrière du Trône and the Rue du Temple that is not the work of this great painter, or that costs less than five hundred francs. The great reason why the townsfolk employ this artist is this: 'Say what you like, he invests twenty thousand francs a year through his notary.'

As Grassou behaved very well in the riots of the 12th of May, he has been promoted to be an officer of the Legion of Honour. He is major in the National Guard. The Versailles gallery was bound to order a battle-scene of so worthy a citizen, who forthwith walked all about Paris to meet his old comrades, and to say with an air of indifference, 'The King has ordered me to paint a battle!'

Madame de Fougères adores her husband, whom she has presented with two children. The painter, however, a good father and a good husband, cannot altogether get rid of a haunting thought: other painters make fun of him; his name is a term of contempt in every studio; the newspapers never notice his works. Still, he works on, and is making his way to the Academy; he will be admitted. And then—a revenge that swells his heart with pride—he buys pictures by famous artists when they are in difficulties, and he is replacing the daubs at the Ville d'Avray by real masterpieces—not of his own painting.

There are mediocrities more vexatious and more spiteful than that of Pierre Grassou, who is in fact anonymously benevolent and perfectly obliging.

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